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T·L·S
THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRIDAY • 24 OCTOBER 1980 • No 4047 • 40p

"The peasant looking out of a window": an etching by the seventeenth-century Dutch artist Cornelis Bega. Bega is one of several little-known artists of different periods brought to attention in the Arts Council's interesting exhibition More Than A Glance, *which will be reviewed in the TLS next week. The show, put together by Andrew Walton and Michael Harrison from many public and private collections, is at the Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield, until November 2, and then at the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum (November 8 to December 6), the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery and Museum, Swansea (December 13 to January 24), the Southampton Art Gallery (February 7 to March 8) and the Elizabethan Exhibition Gallery, Wakefield (March 14 to April 19).*

Commentary:
'The Romans in Britain'
African writers at Frankfurt
Seamus Heaney:
Irish against English
Kitaj drawings;
'British Art Now'
A Peer Gynt musical

The many gifts of Wilhelm von Humboldt

A new prose Homer;
The poetry of L. E. Sissman

Fiction:
Anthony Burgess, Erica Jong, Kingsley Amis, Richard Adams

The new Lamarckism;
The rise of labour

Fellow-travellers with the Fascists

Mulready's ambiguities,
Wilkins's neo-classicism

The art criticism of Clement Greenberg

Archery; Erotic verse

THE TIMES

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

OCTOBER 24 1980

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The rays of the December sun

By Hugh Lloyd-Jones

PAUL R. SWEET:
Wilhelm von Humboldt
A Biography
Volume 2: 1803-1835
572pp. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. $25.
0 8142 0278 0

The first volume of this admirable biography, reviewed by me in the TLS of October 20, 1978, ended at the point when its subject left Rome in October 1808, after six years as Prussian envoy to the Holy See. The second consists of four long chapters. The first covers the years between 1808 and 1810, including the period of eighteen months during which Humboldt carried out his epoch-making reform of Prussian education; the second the years between 1810 and 1815, which he spent first as Prussian Minister to Austria and then as Hardenberg's colleague as delegate at the Congress of Vienna; the third the final phase of his political career, including his brief spell as Prussian Minister in London and ending with his fall from power at the end of 1819; and the fourth the period between then and his death in 1835, marked by his later studies in the philosophy of history and the greater part of his vast contribution to the study of language.

Humboldt might have seemed a strange choice to head the section of the Ministry of the Interior that was responsible for education and ecclesiastical affairs. He was not known to be religious, he had never been to school, and he had only spent a brief time at a university. But nothing interested him more than education, and he had spent many years upon his own.

When he took over, elementary education in Prussia was in a poor state, especially in the country districts, where the post of schoolmaster was often entrusted to a retired soldier, cobbler and tailor. J. E. von Massow, who had been in charge of education from 1798 to 1807, thought that the education of the lower orders should be such as to fit them for the station in life to which they had been called. Humboldt, with his eighteenth-century belief in the dignity of all beings as such, insisted that all should have the same basic primary education; he supported the introduction of Pestalozzi's methods, though he attached more importance than Pestalozzi to the study of the Bible. He established the humanistic gymnasium as the basic institution leading to the university, resisting the powerful advocates of vocational training in secondary education. Humboldt was not opposed to the idea of technical and business schools, and avoided excessive emphasis on language study; he made philosophy, mathematics and history the central subjects; but he firmly separated vocational training from that humanistic education which could promote what he called *Bildung*, self-formation. The gymnasium has often been reproached with being "élitist"; but it is often became so after Humboldt's time, that was not his fault, since he was a convinced believer in meritocracy, and did all he could to promote equality of opportunity.

Massow had been in favour of letting the Prussian universities disappear, preferring to encourage institutions of the type of the Ecole Polytechnique which was so successful in contemporary France. Humboldt believed that the state existed for the sake of the individual, and that none of its duties was more important than that of promoting individual *Bildung*. Professors were not there to serve the students, but both were there to serve knowledge (*Wissenschaft*); together they were to form a community of scholars.

He took great pains to provide the new University of Berlin with professors of the highest quality: Schleiermacher, Fichte, F. A. Wolf and the lawyer Theodor Schmalz were already in Berlin and could provide a nucleus, and several young men who had later had brilliant careers were appointed: Savigny, aged thirty-one, and Boeckh, aged twenty-five, were chosen, and Bopp came later, on Humboldt's recommendation. The university was closely linked with the Prussian Academy, which had hitherto failed to realize the hopes of its founder, Leibniz, but whose great days now began. Humboldt carefully avoided the mistake of not allowing scholars enough freedom; he knew that some people preferred to be on their own, and thought everyone should be allowed to work in his own way. He tried hard to get the king to invest the university with a large endowment; but this was refused, for the authorities did not wish it to become too independent. In spite of this the newly founded university at once became a model for the universities of Europe, just as the university of Leiden had after its foundation two centuries before. Advocates of real learning in England, like Mark Pattison, looked to it for inspiration, just as reformers of secondary education, like Matthew Arnold, looked to the Humboldtian gymnasium.

Hardenberg's accession to power in 1810 was a misfortune for Humboldt, who throughout a long and varied relationship was to stand in Hardenberg's shadow. The Chancellor's immediate solution of the problem he presented was to send him to Vienna, a less congenial post than Rome, and one where a difficult task awaited him. At the very start, enemies circulated the rumour that he was closely linked with the activists of the Prussian Tugendbund, who were agitating for a renewed revolt against Napoleon.

Humboldt felt indeed much sympathy with Gneisenau and his supporters, but he was fully aware of the inadvisability of any action for the time being. The marriage of Marie Louise had given Austria a kind of special relationship with France, and until as late as August 1813 Metternich continued to be extremely cautious. It is true that Henry Kissinger in *A World Restored* has assured us that from 1811 Metternich had secretly worked for the downfall of Napoleon; here as usual Kissinger follows Wilhelm Oncken in his work of 1884-86, but Paul Sweet points out that even Srbik in his admiring biography of Metternich thought that Oncken went too far in this respect. (In an interesting note on page 225, Sweet points out that though Kissinger gives the impression that the only part of Oncken's book that is valuable is the documents, his debt to this writer seems to be very considerable.) Soon after Metternich replaced Stadion in 1810, Humboldt saw that he was likely to retain power, and acted accordingly. He handled the complicated situation with great tact and flexibility, explaining Austria's difficulties to his own government and waiting until May 1813 before putting real pressure upon Metternich. But he was the life and soul of the movement to rise against Napoleon, and in the last stages he fought with all his strength until Austria declared war on August 11.

At this time Hardenberg was in poor health, and there seemed to be a real possibility that Humboldt might replace him; but his single-minded determination and not unconscious intellectual superiority made him enemies. When Stadion made his proposals for the reorganization of Germany, Humboldt defended the smaller German states: he felt that Germany's strength was cultural, not political, and thought they helped to preserve cultural values.

During the Congress of Chatillon and later he strongly upheld Prussian claims against Metternich. He got his way over the preliminary organization of the Congress of Vienna, but not over the eventual decisions. Talleyrand saw with great clarity that Prussia was the power most likely to be a danger to France in the future, and set himself to oppose her. But though Prussia failed to get the whole of Saxony she was richly compensated in Westphalia and the Rhineland, territories that were destined to turn out more valuable. Similarly at the Second Peace of Paris Humboldt failed in his struggle against Russia and England, who wished to impose moderate terms on France, but Prussia now added the Saar basin to the Ruhr, largely through his efforts.

After the successful conclusion of the war, the change of atmosphere that could be felt everywhere in Europe could be felt in Prussia also. A reactionary trend set in, and it was not favourable to Humboldt's interests. His earlier memorandum advocating the removal of all disabilities placed upon the Jews had not been fully accepted by Hardenberg in his edict of emancipation of 1812, and after 1815 the law was administered in reactionary fashion. In his youth Humboldt and his wife Caroline had much frequented the company of Jews; but now his son-in-law Colonel von Bedemann belonged to the Christian German Dining Club where "no Jews, no French, and no Philistines were tolerated", Caroline said unkind things about the Jews, though she still saw them, and Humboldt himself ceased to see them. This was a sign of the times. Reactionary counsellors like Prince von Sayn-Wittgenstein and the clergyman Ancillon became influential; the trend towards absolutism was unmistakable. Humboldt had a long struggle to obtain the royal donation to which his services entitled him; the economic situation, it is true, was bad, but other less deserving people had been given more.

In 1817-18 Hardenberg got rid of him by sending him as Minister to London. Though he delighted in the Elgin Marbles and discussed the temple of Bassae with Sir Charles Cockerell, Egyptian hieroglyphics with Thomas Young and Sanskrit with Charles Wilkins, he had less time for cultural activities than might have been expected. But he got on well with the Prince Regent, who sang to him at dinner, entertained him at the Brighton Pavilion, amid architecture as different as possible from that of Tegel, and later as king had him painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence; he gratified his own monarch by defending the interests of his mother-in-law the Duke of Cumberland, the wickedest of all Queen Victoria's wicked uncles; and, most important of all, he negotiated a loan to the Prussian Government by the London Rothschilds, thus making friends, to his own later advantage, with the powerful financier Christian von Rother.

But when after his return to Berlin in 1818, Hardenberg offered him a choice between four posts, he turned them all down, wishing only to be a member of the Staatsrat, where he would certainly have been a nuisance to the government; his friendship with Stein can have done nothing to lighten Hardenberg's suspicions. Pressed to accept ministerial office in February 1819, he took up his duties only in June, because of diplomatic duties at the Frankfurt headquarters of the Bund. Soon afterwards he was put out by the arrest of certain liberals, including his friend, the eminent Greek scholar F. G. Welcker, and also by the government's shelving of the question of a new constitution: the passing of the reactionary Karlsbad Decrees in late September made his position virtually intolerable. That issue, together with his strong dislike of Hardenberg's

system of personal government as Chancellor, provoked the act of defiance which led to his dismissal on the last day of 1819.

With complete equanimity Humboldt retired to Tegel and occupied himself with learned work. After Hardenberg's death in 1822, Job von Witzleben tried to get him made Chancellor; but prejudice against him, particularly in the narrow mind of Frederick William III, was still too strong. The thought that he might well have been appointed to that office remains one of the fascinating might-have-beens of history; Sweet quotes Hajo Holborn as having written that Humboldt's programme "might have paved the road towards the progressive acceptance of the rising middle and lower classes into an integrated political community".

Greek poets and historians liked to point to a particular event which seemed to start a chain of happenings leading to disaster as a "beginning of evil"; in this sense, Humboldt's dismissal might be regarded as the "beginning of evil" from which the at first triumphant but later disastrous course of Prussian history started.

Sweet is surely right to contest the view that Humboldt really wanted nothing better than to retire from politics and live the life of a scholar. He was by no means ambitious; but he refused to compromise, and having staked his career upon a single throw and lost, he accepted the result with a good grace. Unlike thoroughgoing politicians such as Metternich and Bismarck, he had abundant resources for living happily in private life. In 1830, after his successful chairmanship of the committee set up to establish the new Berlin Museum, he enjoyed a partial return to favour, and was awarded the Order of the Black Eagle. He was appointed to the Staatsrat, and very soon justified Hardenberg's reluctance to admit him to that body by making himself such a nuisance to the government that it was compelled to suspend the sittings.

Humboldt took pleasure in the Silesian estate of Ottmachau, which had been conferred upon him by the king; he purchased another estate, Hadmersleben, near Magdeburg, and Caroline had her own Burg Orner, in Hanover, which she preferred. But his own favourite residence was Schloss Tegel, just outside Berlin, which after the alterations he employed Schinkel to carry out expressed and still expresses his elegant austerity with singular fidelity. Here he housed his impressive collections of ancient sculpture, mostly acquired in Rome, and modern works by artists like Thorwaldsen and Rauch; and Sweet justly remarks that Tegel has the same symbolic significance with regard to Humboldt that Monticello has with regard to Thomas Jefferson.

Humboldt's disappearance from public life was disastrous for Germany, and perhaps for Europe; but in one way it was most fortunate, for the literary work which his leisure enabled him to carry out was of singular importance. He followed up his earlier important studies in historiography of 1814 and 1819 with the treatise *Über die Aufgabe des Geschichtschreibers*: his insistence that it is the historian's task to discover the ideas that lie behind the facts had great influence on historical writing of the nineteenth century, and has been invoked in recent times to warn historians not to lose their central purpose in a mass of details.

But Humboldt's work on the philosophy of history was far less important than his contribution to linguistics. He learnt an immense variety of languages, and did valuable work on Ancient Egyptian, Chinese and Sanskrit. In studying this last, he was greatly attracted by the Bhagavad-Gita, and particularly by its message that the motive must be in the deed and not in the event; in a review of his edition of the work Hegel declined to share Humboldt's high estimate of its value. He did valuable work on Amerindian languages, and Sweet has interesting information about the contacts with the American linguists John Pickering and Peter Du Ponceau which he owed to George Bancroft. From 1827 he was increasingly occupied with the languages of South-East Asia, Indonesia and Polynesia, and between 1830 and 1835 appeared his monumental study of Kawi, the hieratic and poetic language of Java, with its famous back-length introduction *Über die Verschiedenheiten des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts*.

Sweet has made good use of a considerable part of the extensive modern literature about Humboldt's linguistics; but he is not familiar with it all, as a glance at the extensive bibliography given by Anna Morpurgo Davies in *Current Trends in Linguistics* (Volume 13, 1975) will show, and in some places he has oversimplified complicated questions. He tells us that Humboldt took over from F. Schlegel the distinction between agglutinative and inflecting languages, but held that the latter had developed from the former.

But Gertrud Pätsch has shown that Humboldt expressed different views about linguistic classification at different times, and never came to any firm conclusion on the subject. He conceived of language as being, in Aristotelian terms, not an *organ*, a finished product, but an *energeia*, a creative activity. The form of language is the unvarying factor that underlies each linguistic act; and each language has its inner form, in virtue of which it has its particular world outlook. Humboldt thought that classification should depend upon the inner form; but sometimes he identified this with the organic principle which serves to differentiate the various languages, and at other times with the general form of thought.

Humboldt is often referred to as a precursor of the linguistic relativism of modern theorists like Sapir and Whorf, and he certainly believed that each language embodied a different way of looking at the world. But as Sweet says there is also a universalist element in his thinking. He did not believe that differences between languages had anything to do with race, but did think that advanced types of linguistic morphology went with higher stages of cultural development. Just as language could facilitate thinking, it could also hinder it, and Humboldt thought some languages more satisfactory than others in this respect. He thought each language had its own intrinsic value, but he preferred the Indo-European languages, and in particular Ancient Greek. Often disregarded or belittled by the positivistic linguists of the nineteenth century, his work with its great wealth of fertile general ideas is now receiving much attention.

Language did not monopolize his energies during his last years. In 1830 he brought out an admirable study of Schiller's intellectual development, and also a highly interesting review of the then new volume of Goethe's *Italienische Reise*. He wrote a considerable quantity of poetry, as well as many letters full of general reflections upon life to his friend Charlotte Diede: a selection of these letters, published after his death, seems to have owed much of its great popularity to qualities not especially typical of Humboldt's usual self. Humboldt's marriage was beyond all doubt successful, and the rich, clever and attractive Caroline was not only his wife but his best friend. But her positive and independent character was not responsive to a side of his nature which required a woman to be obedient and indeed submissive, and this requirement had to be fulfilled by Charlotte Diede and her predecessor, Johanna Motherby.

An enemy once called Humboldt "cold and clear as the December sun", causing Caroline to begin her next letter "Liebe klare'kalte Dezembersonne". But Humboldt himself wrote:

Hell wie im Mai nicht an Gefühle
weil sie in mir nicht an Gefühle
glauben;
die mir so oft des Lebens Ruhe
raubten,
die innre Stürme sie in mir sich
kannten.

The cool rationality of his outward demeanour masked, indeed, a passionate temperament. He certainly not without ambition, but he refused to compromise with persons or principles that he disapproved of; and having staked his career upon a struggle against Napoleon and lost, he could retire into private life with perfect contentment, to produce a great quantity of writing of striking learning and originality. For him the study of language was a means of studying man. People have complained that he was interested in man only, and lacked a religious sense; but he was at all times to an eighteenth-century conception of human nature, and did not altogether lack a religious element.

This second volume has shown the general characteristics as its predecessor. Professor Sweet is to expect an diplomatic history, and not surprisingly his account of Humboldt's diplomatic activities is particularly good. But he has taken great pains over Humboldt's cultural and literary activities also, and a reader interested in any aspect of this extraordinary man must be grateful to him for a notable achievement.

The hypothetical hidden plan

By Patrick Gardiner

YIRMIAHU YOVEL :
Kant and the Philosophy of History
325pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £10.20.
0 691 07225 6

It is not unusual to find Kant's name closely associated with the development of the philosophy of history in any of its principal forms. From an epistemological point of view his prime concern is customarily supposed to have been with the foundations of mathematics and natural science; it was, after all, to examining the presuppositions of such knowledge, rather than those underlying inquiries dealing with human beings and their activities, that he chiefly directed his energies in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and elsewhere. In doing so, moreover, he was at the same time intent upon exhibiting the proper limits of human cognition, thereby delimiting the pretensions of those who sought to establish conclusions about what necessarily lay beyond the sphere of sensory phenomena.

It would therefore appear reasonable to have expected him to cast a cold and sceptical eye on all speculations concerning the historical process which endowed it with more than a purely empirical significance and treated it as the manifestation of some hidden metaphysical essence or providential principle. Further, and at a more general level, Kant tends to be regarded as a philosopher who remained largely unpuzzled by "historicist" ideas of the sort that affected other German thinkers of his period. Thus the claim, recurrent throughout his work, that the ultimate sources of thought and volition transcend the spatio-temporal framework within which ordinary experience is set seems to leave no room for conceptions of human reason which portray it as something that develops over time and is responsive to the influence of historical circumstance and change. Views of the latter kind may have found expression in the writings of such men as Herder and Hegel; they have normally been felt, however, to be essentially foreign to the spirit that informed Kant's own thinking about the nature of the mind.

How far, though, are these assumptions really justified? It would certainly be untrue to assert that Kant had nothing to say about history from a philosophical standpoint, if only because he wrote an extended essay specifically devoted to the subject entitled *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*. Even so, this essay has often been treated by commentators as being a mere appendage to the main body of Kant's thought, and a somewhat embarrassing one at that. For he speaks there as if the course of world history could be construed as the product of a hidden plan according to which "nature", working through the competitive and largely self-interested propensities of men, eventually leads them to construct a rational social order wherein the capacities and talents originally implanted in human beings may be fully developed and realized. But as it stands such a teleological hypothesis seems to be exposed to suspected objections stemming from the anti-metaphysical theses which Kant himself advanced in his first *Critique*. And in so far as the hypothesis in question cannot be rendered consistent with his own declared principles, the suspicion inevitably returns that considerations relating to history were not germane to his true philosophical concerns. Nevertheless, it is Yirmiahu Yovel's contention in *Kant and the Philosophy of History* that a closer attention to themes explored in Kant's other major writings—in particular, the second and third *Critiques*—yields a picture of his attitude to history which "reinstates it in the framework of the critical philosophy".

Thus, in the first place, Kant makes it clear in the *Critique of Judgment* (where the whole notion of teleology is subjected to an elaborate analysis) that the teleological model he had employed in his earlier essay can be interpreted in a "regulative" or heuristic sense that entails no breach of his critical principles. He suggests, in other words, that we can make the course of history intelligible to ourselves by viewing it *as if* it followed a purposive pattern, while at the same time recognizing that this in no way justifies us in assuming the presence of some objective principle or purposive agency mysteriously embedded in reality. Hence in this context the appeal to what may be called "the cunning of nature" essentially serves a methodological function; it enables us to impose structure and coherence upon the chaotic flux of historical events by invoking what must properly be understood as possessing no more than a purely analogical significance.

This is not, however, that end of the story. For Yovel claims that Kant's conception of historical development takes on a new aspect when it is seen against the background of certain ideas deriving from his moral philosophy. Basing himself upon Kant's assertion in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that there exists a duty to promote "the highest good", Yovel maintains that Kant conceived man's historical destiny to consist in the "task" of reshaping the world in such a way as to make it accord with the *a priori* demands of his own reason. In this manner it is possible to elicit from Kant's writings the notion of a "historical imperative" which "requires the gradual transformation of nature into a system that embodies the practical ends of reason and assists in their further realization". From such a standpoint the teleological conception of the historical process as evolving according to a "plan of nature" can at best be understood as playing a regulative or subsidiary role; it may help us to appreciate at the empirical level how the basic elements of a civilized social order are formed, but such an order can never constitute more than the institutional framework within which moral agents, as free and autonomous agents, are called upon to create a morally acceptable society conforming to the self-generated precepts of their rational will. It is upon human beings in the latter capacity that the responsibility for realizing the goal of history in the shape of an ideal "ethical community" ultimately devolves.

Kant's approach to history as finally emerges from Yovel's account may thus be said to have two distinguishable components. The first involves the idea of an intelligible sequence of events recurrent within the world of experience and propelled by the natural passions and inclinations of men, the second the notion of human reason as something whose source is "alien to nature" and which is capable of imposing itself "transcendental precepts" upon the phenomenal realm from without. Yovel believes, moreover, that a similar interplay between rational and empirical aspects of Kant's treatment of history is discernible when what he said about the development of religious and philosophical doctrines. It is apparent, however, that in the last analysis Kant never really succeeded in relating these aspects to one another satisfactorily and that this failure was connected with the dualism between phenomenal and noumenal reality which underlay his system as a whole, the proper sphere of reason being regarded as "lying beyond all temporalized experience".

In general, Yovel's discussion pursues a rather circuitous course, with a good deal of repetition; and his concluding assessment of the Kantian position may strike the reader as coming as something of an anti-climax after his earlier claim that the idea of history can be shown to be "an integral part of the critical philosophy". For in some respects it may be felt to confirm rather than dispel the doubts of those who have questioned this view. On the other hand, his overall treatment of the subject has the compensatory merit of pointing up tensions in Kant's outlook whose significance for subsequent excursions into the philosophy of history has been insufficiently appreciated by historians of ideas; for example, and as he himself suggests, Hegel's theory may be seen as an attempt to resolve Kant's dilemma by substituting for the latter's transcendentalism a conception of reason which presents its development as being necessarily embodied in the actual processes of empirical history. The passages which Yovel considers Kant's hopes occupations in the context of issues raised later on by both Hegel and Marx are, indeed, among the best in the book.

Paradoxes and Oxymorons

This poem is concerned with language on a very plain level.
Look at it talking to you. You look out a window
Or pretend to fidget. You have it but you don't have it.
You miss it, it misses you. You miss each other.

The poem is sad because it wants to be yours, and cannot.
What's a plain level? It is that and other things,
Bringing a system of them into play. Play?
Well, actually, yes, but I consider play to be

A deeper outside thing, a dreamed role-pattern,
As in the division of grace these long August days
Without proof. Open-ended. And before you know it
It gets lost in the steam and chatter of typewriters.

It has been played once more. I think you exist only
To tease me into doing it, on your level, and then you aren't there
Or have adopted a different attitude. And the poem
Has set me softly down beside you. The poem is you.

John Ashbery

The knowledge of good and evil

By Jeremy Treglown

ANTHONY BURGESS :
Earthly Powers
649pp. Hutchinson. £6.95
0 09 143910 8

Of the many possible places to begin talking about Anthony Burgess's enormous and enormously impressive new novel, an allusion to Joyce seems apt. *Earthly Powers* is *A Portrait of the Artist as an Old Man* and recognizably, if half-covertly, takes Joyce's *Portrait* as a narrative, thematic and in some (perhaps too many) respects stylistic starting point. Joyce begins with a near-infant narrator, Burgess with an octogenarian—a successful playwright, novelist and writer of short stories, who tells his story from about the age Stephen Dedalus leaves off. Stephen struggles to emancipate himself from inherited Roman Catholicism in order to serve the earthly powers of love and art; in doing so (*Stephen Hero* and *Ulysses* suggest), he breaks the heart of his dying mother. Kenneth Toomey does the same.

In both cases the religious decision is largely sexual, and here Burgess parts company with Joyce: for Toomey's split with the Church is mainly a consequence of its intolerance of homosexuality. Another reviewer has stepped wrongly. Toomey should be homosexual. Why shouldn't he? If his story in some respects continues Stephen Dedalus's, Toomey's life is more closely modelled on that of Maugham.

Both comparisons could be developed further, though both break down at various points: Toomey's spiritual conscience is closer to Graham Greene's than to anything Maugham seems to have known, and his behaviour in the Second World War manages to combine aspects of Forster (liberal courage in the cause of individuals) and of Wodehouse (he makes an ill-advised but hardly avoidable broadcast on German radio). But if the comparisons fail, much as translations into a foreign language—one of Burgess's favourite motifs—fail, in terms of full and precise equivalences, they are demanded at every stage of the novel; not least because it determinedly, if often playfully, brings real people into the narrative. Joyce and Maugham themselves walk on, as do Ford Madox Ford, Pound and others, all of them treated by the old man with plausible, half-humorous fuchsiness—"you may as well have Ernest Hemingway shadowboxing his way round the periphery".

This is more than a clever game or an authenticating procedure, though it is those too. *Earthly Powers* is a novel which engages twentieth-century preoccupations, events, and problems in a way that makes David Lodge's *How Far Can You Go?* look like a parish magazine. In the process, it explores the dealings of fiction with the actual: fiction's kaleidoscopic reorderings and refractions of real bits and pieces into a vivid pattern, a pattern made in *Earthly Powers* out of the combination of an intellectual, witty scheme with the narrative shapings of a more traditional sequential novel.

This scheme is both intensely grim and, in the end, unexpectedly consoling. To write about it intelligibly, it is necessary to give away some of what come in the story as appalling surprises, including one particularly audacious fictional coup. To read it knowing its outcome will be a different kind of experience, and one, like knowing how *Lear* ends, that has its own bleak rewards. I can think of few recent fictions I would more willingly read again straight away.

Toomey's life as an increasingly successful writer and a passionate but mostly unhappy homosexual lover is closely linked with his sister, Hortense, of whom he is deeply, almost incestuously fond and who marries an Italian composer, Domenico, with whom Toomey has worked. It is linked too, with Domenico's brother, Carlo, a priest. Carlo is a saint, or at least his claims to sainthood are being investigated at the beginning of the novel, when Toomey is old, and are set out in the rest of it, which follows Toomey's career more or less chronologically through from his youth. Convinced of the essential goodness of man and of the externality of evil (in the familiar Pelagian-Augustinian debate of Burgess's fiction), the heftily worldly, hard-drinking, ambitious, physically forceful Carlo uses a combination of earthly and apparently divine powers to cast out devils; or this is what he seems to be doing. He's not always successful—indeed, he usually fails in his direct aims, unable to save the life of Toomey's most-loved friend, Philip, in Singapore (at the end of a particularly vivid Maugham-like episode), or of one of his own brothers, a victim of gang violence in Chicago. But there is always an indirect apparent success. On the second of these occasions, for example, Carlo miraculously cures a dying child in the same ward as his brother. As Toomey later reflects, "The power . . . fell where it would, indifferent as grace, wild like goodness. No favours to friends."

Carlo's attempts to knock evil on the head continue in the Second World War, when he has particular difficulties with a captured SS commander he imprisons and tries to convert. If the pessimistic Toomey comes to learn that goodness grows wild, Carlo now finds that there are some places where it cannot grow at all. And the war provides the novel with one of several Burgessian nexuses of inexplicable and outrageous wickedness, in the face of which individuals' feeble attempts at goodness are wrenched round and against them. So it is, at any rate, with Toomey's own war efforts, which occur early on. He fortuitously saves the life of Himmler ("The power . . . fell where it would, indifferent . . ."); and his courageous attempt to get a Jewish novelist called Strehler out of Austria fails.

There are other rescue bids at other points in this deeply symmetrical fiction. One of them occurs when Toomey tries, and again fails because of the resistance of the person he is trying to save—there is a Christian point here, obviously—to get out a niece from the commune of a religious cult very similar to the notorious real one in Jonestown, Guyana. The fictional cult is run by charismatic leader called Godfrey ("God") Manning. Don't read the next paragraph if you don't want to know what happens.

Manning's disciples, 1,700 men, women and children, live a life of fundamentalist obedience and are kept happy with drugged communion wafers. When "God" is found out and the FBI come, he gives his people poison ("Take yo and eat. This is my body") and they all die, except the children who, finding the wafers bitter, spit them out, so that he has to strangle them. This is horrible in itself, and brutally well described, but it's hardly unpredictable. What we are completely unprepared for is Toomey's later discovery, years near the end of the novel, that Good Manning was the child Carlo restored to life in the Chicago hospital. An incident exhilarating both in itself and in the support it has lent, throughout much of the story, to our sense of Carlo as a force for good, is suddenly and shockingly subverted. "The power . . . fell where it would . . . No favours to friends."

It has always been the great tragic theme, the difficulty not just of averting evil but of recognizing it. How do we distinguish between God Manning and Carlo, the equally charismatic, equally carnal cardinal? In circumstances his earlier ruthless opportunism makes slightly suspicious (the other leading candidate dies during the conclave) Carlo is elected Pope as successor to Pius XII. On the face of things the passionate, fallible Carlo/Gregory XVII is a preferable phenomenon to God Manning; but there is plenty of room for finding them both bad. Carlo is ignorant and inadequate, for example, when he is needed to help Domenico in his marital difficulties with Hortense, difficulties which and in emotional wreckage (another symbol, of course, this time about the Church's continued pastoral failure in respect of marriage; though it reads as a naturalistic incident). Again, in his questionably successful conversion of the SS man, with its shades of *A Clockwork Orange*—the film version of which half-figures in this novel—Carlo uses torture.

This equivocality of ethical experience, the frustratingly mikeshift, provisional, inadequate nature of earthly moral powers, is one of the novel's most effective subjects. Certainly *Earthly Powers* doesn't end where it looks at the beginning as if it is going to. So far from, say, returning to the Catholic fold, Toomey ends in Sussex, living with Wigmall and the local Anglican church: a fairly happy but by no means unironic slide from Joyce *via* Maugham into Betjemanland.

Betjeman figures early in the novel, under the name Wigmall. A Wigmall poem is quoted as a very successful comic diversion, so it seems, though the subject is, one realizes in retrospect, bound in with what follows:

Thus kneeling at the altar rail
We ate the Word's white papery
wafer.
Here, so I thought, desire must fall,
My chastity be never safer.
But then I saw your tongue protrude
To catch the wisp of angel's food.
Dear God! I reeled beneath the
shock:
My Eton suit, your party frock,
Christmas, the dark, and postman's
knock!

Earthly Powers is full of such parodic brilliancies, as it is full of caricatured or modified people and events. But if it plays with the processes of fiction, with the transubstantiation of the actual into the preferred, Burgess does the actual itself with all his usual vividness. Grueseme and comic roughtrade scenes are closely realized ("The other sailor had released a mealy coil of vomit on to the piano keyboard"—how good the "mealy coil" is, and how much better the passive "released"!). And the natural world is conveyed with a Joycean indulgent rhetoric: "I approached the tree (in an Australian forest), and it at once broke and flashed and whirred into a hundredfold of galah birds, white-bellied, orange-crested, their wings the hue of the tea-rose". There is high rhetoric of a different kind, too, in Carlo's intensely stirring sermons and speeches.

It would be possible to describe these and other aspects of Burgess's novel so as to suggest more not only of their separate value but of their inter-relationship, the way in which the narrative threads (many more than I have mentioned) in this sometimes apparently rambling *Kunstlerroman* come together. One would talk about Burgess's sensitive and unsentimental close-quarters treatment of Toomey's sexuality, and about the importance in the novel of music, about which, of course, Burgess here as elsewhere writes very well. One would talk, too, about the way he succeeds at the near-impossible business of writing in the artist's first person: a problem got over by Joyce through his artist's being, though vain, not yet successful, by Burgess through Toomey's being deeply and convincingly modest about the nature and value of his work—"Those of you here who aspire to be novelists", Toomey tells a crowd of American students, "do please remember that the mechanics of the craft are more important than angling for truths or changing the world. If your work changes the world, well, it will not be because of your purposing."

Toomey's own narrative makes this modesty unnecessary. *Earthly Powers* is a big, grippingly readable, extraordinarily rich and moving fiction by one of the most ambitiously creative writers working in English. Bernard Bergonzi concluded an interesting and mostly favourable short account of Burgess's work recently with the ministerial qualification "his recent development is not encouraging". He seems to be doing alright this term.

Terry Quinn's *The Great Bridge Conspiracy* (196pp. Allen and Unwin. £5.50. 0 04 823177 0) is a mixture of bridge and espionage, in which Terence Kane, fanatical bridge buff but mediocre player, meets the mysterious Captain Diggery Piper and becomes a member of the Piper Quartet, which sweeps through the Grand National Knockout tournament to reach the finals in San Francisco, and hand on the micro-dot concealed on the five of spades. Amusing, witty and ingenious, with some brilliantly contrived hands behind which the plot gets a little lost. But it is never the most important element, and pleasing detail makes up for the imbalance; the rah rah chants which encourage the Library of Congress Bibliophiles, for instance: "Rational discourse, community of scholars./We wouldn't trade our bridge team for a ton of federal dollars."

T. J. Binyon

Under the linden tree

By A. N. Wilson

RICHARD ADAMS :
The Girl in a Swing
397pp. Allen Lane. £5.95.
0 7139 1407 6

Henry James, who regarded Rudyard Kipling as containing "the seeds of an English Balzac", was later to complain that he came down steadily "from the simple in subject to the more simple—from the Anglo-Indians to the natives, from the natives to the Tommies, from the Tommies to the quadrupeds, from the quadrupeds to the fish, from the fish to eagles and screws".

Richard Adams evidently intends his literary career to reverse this pattern. He began as the great chronicler of life in the warren; he ascended from the rabbit to the bear; from the bear to the dog; and now, in his latest remarkable novel, *The Girl in a Swing*, he has attempted to describe human, and indeed superhuman, beings. He is certainly no Balzac; but it has to be said that, even in the most excruciating moments, one keeps turning the pages. No one can deny that the author of *Watership Down* has an irresistible narrative gift.

This book could be described as a somewhat *rara avis*. It would be wrong to give away the plot, but one cannot convey its flavour without revealing that it is a retelling of the Tannhäuser myth from the point of view, not of a thirteenth-century minnesinger but of the proprietor of a china shop in Newbury during the 1970s. He, one Alan Desland, believes himself to be gifted with second sight. But, as in all the best ghost stories—*The Turn of the Screw* comes to mind—it is hard to tell whether the first-person narrative is a dispassionate account of supernatural happenings, or the swollen-headed ravings of a "Culture Vulture" almost mad with egotism.

Alan has business to do in Copenhagen (Kopenhava to him, with his fluent Danish) and stays there with some publishers called Jarl and Tyke Borgen. The publication is one that those two characters are actual people in real life. They arrange for Alan to have some typing done (china-vendors are in constant need of typists) and the typist turns out to be a beautiful girl called Karin who falls in love with him instantly. Alan takes her out, chats her up in his fluent German and invites her out to a restaurant, where he is cravenly impressed by her desire to throw money about and insult waiters. She further increases in his regard when she wrings the neck of a dying seagull. And, when she cuts her foot, he masochistically enjoys licking the blood off it.

They visit Elsinore, where he is afraid she might tease me for being pretentious"; but any such fears are soon dispelled. When they later go to a concert we get a true glimpse of how wonderfully sensitive this Desland is.

Orsino might not have been able to keep his mind on the music—he lacked, of course, the advantage of congenial company—but I could all right. My capacity exceeded as the sea. My attention wandered. I felt I was hearing everything that Mozart wished me to hear . . . There was a star danced and under that I was born.

Clever Alan. And when his girlfriend pipes up with

"*Also wandelst du, Geliebte,*
Still und sicher, und es zittert
Nur dein Abbild im Herzen."

She stopped, frowning again, and I, knowing the poem well, prompted her in a whisper.

"*Weil mein. . . .*"

Heine? Goethe? Marvoll? You name it, he knows it. The German-speaking Karin is understandably puzzled by the lines:

"There lies a bird it sits and
. . . . . sings,
. . . . . silver wings. . . ."

Karin gave a little cry of pleasure. "Oh, how lovely! But why does she wet her wings? And what with?"

I explained.

If only his explanation had been recorded. "Marvell scholars have been puzzled for years about how a bird *whets* its wings.

When Alan brings Karin back to Newbury, being a no-nonsense conservative Anglican (an admirer, of course, of Cranmer's incomparable prose), he naturally wants a church wedding. Alan is fund of the Bible. When he hears the parable of the lost sheep being read aloud in church, "'Good stuff', I thought, 'Couldn't have put it better myself'". Although a devout man, he has a bluff attitude towards his Saviour. The *Agnus Dei* "always gives me a mental picture of old Jesus stumping one along with a sack, to chuck them in the sea or something". Them? The sins of the world, presumably. It is a bit of a shock, then, that Karin insists on a rousing office job.

Being a Newbury shopkeeper with not very much money, Alan happens to be dining at the Hyde Park Hotel with an American client, who begs him to go over to Florida at his expense, get married and have the honeymoon there. Alack and alay, for the first few days, poor old Alan is impotent. But some naked underwater swimming, when he thinks he has stumbled upon a rotting corpse under the water (Mrs Winter?), for some reason stimulates his sexual appetite, and for the rest of the book it will not merely be his feminist readers who find his repeated couplings ("warm, wet and soft as a sponge") with the lovely Karin distasteful. Since he believes that "a wife's abilities should include those of a whore", it is no surprise that he derives satisfaction from the fact that "she could be lewd, a sow grunting under the boar".

At times, the story seems fantastical enough without the introduction of supernatural elements. Karin, by reading a few books about pottery on their return to Berkshire, makes them a potential £150,000 by buying a piece of Bow China at a sale for £20. This piece is "the girl in a swing" of the title; though that also refers to the famous painting by Fragonard, and to Karin herself, whom Alan finds naked on the garden swing in Newbury, surrounded, significantly, by bushes.

There's a lot that's attractive about the ancient world's great fertility goddess Aphrodite, Ashtaroth, Astargatis, whatever you like to call her—with her marvellous attributes—the water, and the moon, and hares and sparrows and lime trees and so on.

No ordinary Newbury girl would have done for A. Desland, evidently.

All is not well with Karin. It never has been. Experienced dabblers in the world of faerie will have been on their guard ever since Alan glimpsed her in Copenhagen under a linden tree. There are all manner of horrors to come, including a ghostly apparition of a stuffed toy tortoise. *Tannhäuser*, as I say, suggests the theme and explains to a certain extent the gratuitous and masturbatory sex in the book. But the range of literary reference is broad. Admirers of the sweatier passages of D. H. Lawrence ("very lightly, Karin touched my tepid wet limpness") will find them filtered through more boyish echoes of Rider Haggard's *She* and C. S. Lewis's *Perelandra*.

Chips from the work bench

By Bernard Bergonzi

KINGSLEY AMIS:
Collected Short Stories
303pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0 09 143430 0

Like Kingsley Amis's recent *Collected Poems*, the *Collected Short Stories* is not a big book; his production of verse and short fiction, though sometimes distinguished, has been occasional and not copious. For nearly thirty years—most of his energy has gone into writing novels, and he sees his short stories as different in scale if not in kind from his novels; in the provocative and somewhat irritable introduction to this volume Amis remarks, "This collection is really one of chips from a novelist's work bench". He likes anecdotes with a bit of point to them, and novelistic narrative development, description and dialogue, rather than the capturing of a mood, or the silent presentation of a slice of life. That is to say, the short story in the manner of Maupassant as opposed to Chekhov.

Amis says of the collection, "These are nearly all the short stories I have ever published; I omit 'The Sacred Rhino of Uganda' (1952) as uncharacteristic". He has also omitted one story from his 1962 collection, *My Enemy's Enemy*; this is "Interesting Things", set in the South Wales of *That Uncertain Feeling* and the "Evans Country" poetry-sequence. It describes the thoughts and feelings of Gloria Davies, an eighteen-year-old comptometer operator, when she is taken to the pictures by Mr Huws-Evans, an unspeakably square and boring Inspector of Taxes. This story is thin but nicely observed; it reads like an early draft of the presentation of a teenage girl's consciousness which Amis later brought off at novel-length with Jenny Bunn in *Take A Girl Like You*.

Amis's early stories are largely realistic, the later ones tend to pastiche, science fiction and occultism. There is a diverting sub-genre that Amis calls "SF-drink". These stories use the established science fiction convention of time travel: an investigator is sent into the future. When he comes back from the various periods he visits, his reports are only marginally or casually about wars and catastrophes and the disasters afflicting civilization. He is principally concerned with the future of English drinking habits. In 2010 he finds that the working class have become connoisseurs of fine wines, whereas the fashionable upper classes prefer to frequent dreary pubs where they drink pints of bitter accompanied by three-day-old cheese rolls and gherkins scattered with cigarette ash. In 2145 the world is trying to recover from a planetary nuclear war which has destroyed most traces of civilization. The time traveller joins a group of so-called connoisseurs (known as "conozers"), "The Friends of Plonk", who indulge in ecstatic flights of wine-bibbers' rhetoric over Red Biddy and alcohol distilled from shoe polish.

These are ingenious, entertaining pieces, with Amis's particular streak of horror and loathing not far below the surface; but compared with some of his other stories they are pretty insubstantial. "Something Strange" is an essay in serious science fiction, originally published in *My Enemy's Enemy*; it is a work of harrowing mystification. Reading it in this new collection, I recalled how it would end, which somewhat undermined my enjoyment on the level of plot, though the story remains effective through the power of the writing and the claustrophobic intensity of feeling. But the difficulty with the Maupassant model that Amis favours, depending on a surprise ending or a sting in the tail, is that the ideal reading is the first reading.

One of the most challenging of Amis's later studies in occultism is "Who or What Was It?", which he discusses in his introduction. It was originally a broadcast talk, which seemed like a straightforward account of a personal experience. Amis, writing in his own person, describes how he and his wife, Jane, driving south from Westmoreland, stopped for dinner at a pub called The Green Man, which bore a remarkable resemblance to the pub of the same name in Amis's novel, *The Green Man*. He then discovers that the staff of the pub have marked but not complete similarities to the staff of the fictional pub. He is seized by an increasing fear that the frightening, supernatural events described in his novel are about to reenact themselves in reality. And so, up to a point, they do.

But none of it happened; it is a lying narrative, fiction disguised as fact. In his introduction Amis berates his readers for their credulity in believing that the bizarre events he described really took place: they included the nocturnal manifestation of the ghostly "green man", apparent bilocation, and even the sexual possession of Amis's—or "Amis's"—wife by an incubus in the form of her husband. A lot of readers were deceived, including Amis's friend, the late Bruce Montgomery, who rang up to ask if it was true, and a representative of the Religious Experience Research Unit at Oxford. Amis tut-tuts heavily about the prevalent credulity. But it *could* have been the record of an elaborate hallucination on the author's part, which may be how some readers took it. Beyond this, the story, which so persuasively presents itself as a true account, shows the power of generic conventions over the reader; believing oneself to be reading fact one tends to go on believing, in spite of the leak of credibility.

Although Amis inveighs against what he calls "cruising credulity", it is evident that he is imaginatively drawn to ghosts and other such psychic phenomena; his persona in "Who or What Was It?" says, "My own position on that is exactly that of the man who said, I don't believe in ghosts, but I'm afraid of them". One of the longer stories, "To See the Sun", is a variant of the Dracula legend, told in a deft pastiche of Bram Stoker's style. There are other echoes of the 1890s; it was a rich period for the short story in general, and tales of the occult in particular. Kipling, a dominant influence at that time, is referred to warmly by Amis in his introduction, and there is a suggestion of the relaxed club-room atmosphere of male story-telling with which Kipling often begins his stories in the opening of Amis's "The House on the Headland". More direct pastiche, this time of Conan Doyle, occurs in "The Darkwater Hall Mystery", supposedly narrated by Dr Watson. There is a different kind of 1890s echo in one of Amis's best stories, "Dear Illusion", a tale of present-day literary life that, despite many differences of language and mores, reminds me of Henry James's stories about writers.

The late-Victorian era was a period when literary culture was not yet completely polarized between the "serious" and the "commercial"; Kipling and Stevenson and Wells happily wrote to supply a growing market in the magazines of the time, and much of what they wrote has survived as literature. There are still some writers whose work is both taken seriously by critics and read by a large popular readership, though they are a declining company; Graham Greene is one and Amis is another. Amis's stories, all well written and professionally constructed, go a long way to concealing the polarity. It is there, nevertheless; the basic difference is between the stories with a smart ingenious point that one gets at once, and those that demand and reward more than one reading.

Amis's best stories are, I think, some of his earlier: "My Enemy's Enemy", "Court of Inquiry" and "I Spy Strangers". They are about life in a signals unit of the British Army towards the end of the Second World War, and are novelistic in their variety of characterization and density of incident. The longest, "I Spy Strangers", is outstanding. It takes places in the summer of 1945, a strange limbo in time between the end of the European War and of the Japanese War, set in an army camp in occupied Germany. The soldiers are eager to be sent home and released, and many of them will be; but there is also the threat for anyone who is difficult or unpopular of being sent instead to Burma; and at that point it was thought that the Far East war might easily last for another year or so. At this time, too, the votes in the recent General Election were being counted; the result—the announcement of which is a central episode in Amis's story—brings in a Labour Government with a huge majority.

Amis catches the anxious, uncertain, aspiring atmosphere of that period accurately and sensitively, with understated comedy. His central figure, the Labour-voting Lieutenant Archer is a decent, *déclassé* young progressive; a representative type of the age, and the kind of figure who recurs in Amis's early fiction. Happy at the election result, he thinks of England, "my England, full of girls and drinks and jazz and books and decent houses and decent jobs and being your own boss". Set against Archer is Sergeant Doll, full of regimental smartness—albeit that in civilian life he had been "Complaints Supervisor at a large store in Leeds"—and articulate, reactionary opinions. Doll is fiercely anti-Communist and anti-Soviet when our Gallant Russian Allies were still wildly popular, and Archer, though liking him personally, regards him as a fascist. The author, too, must once have thought that Doll went too far; by now he probably believes that it was Doll who had the right ideas, rather than the snivelling lefties. But in this story all the characters are treated sympathetically, even the absurdly out-of-touch Major Ruleigh, who is utterly bewildered by the advent of Labour to power. "I Spy Strangers" seems to me not only Amis's finest story, but one of the best pieces of fiction to have come out of the Second World War.

Way back when

By Craig Brown

BRIAN GLANVILLE:
Never Look Back
240pp. Michael Joseph. £6.50.
0 7181 1954 3

The obsession that rock music commentators, be they novelists or journalists, have with the gloomy side of success—alcoholism, drug addiction, insecurity, the loss of identity—leads one to believe that they are writing for a market of yearning youngsters and the depressed and forgotten middle-aged, reassuring them that the forbidden object of their desire is worthless and dangerous. Let us hope that the day will soon come when some wildly experimental rock novelist will portray his hero as happy, heroin-free and heterosexual; in life, such rock stars are plentiful.

Brian Glanville's novel is a compilation of rock clichés, bundled together in a haphazard way to so little effect that one need only scoff at the blurb-writer's suggestion that they have the intensity of myth. Glanville is not helped by his first-person narrator, a highly successful and inarticulate rock star who has everything that the usual readership for this kind of novel could hope for—a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a possessive manager, a passion for his music, a house in Hollywood, a nasty rival, a fear and love of adulation, a dead drummer and a drug problem.

The rock star, one Russ Hope, writes ugly and boorish prose: "Then we came together in midstage for our first exchange of dialogue, bland, no edge to it at all, yet now it did take on an edge, they treated it like it was real." But even if this inelegance can be overlooked, there are many further obstacles to enjoyment. Unless Glanville has unfathomable powers of irony, it seems that Russ Hope is meant to be a sympathetic character, yet his self-obsession, his consistently banal reactions, and his naïve dependence on praise are tremendously off-putting.

The book finally fails because it lacks perspective; the life described is bizarre and extreme, but through the eyes of this sole narrator it seems dull—there is no chorus, there are no onlookers and even Brian Glanville appears absent, as if he were bored ghostwriter transcribing tape-recorded burblings.

Blood, milk and tears

By Pat Rogers

ERICA JONG:
Fanny
Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout Jones
496pp. Granada. £6.95.
0 246 11427 4

Have you met Miss Jones? The real Fanny Hill can at last stand up (or lie down, most of the time): it turns out that her true identity is that of Fanny Hackabout Jones, a foundling brought up in one of the stately homes of Wiltshire. Only, in the end, it emerges that she is not who she seems. John Cleland got everything hopelessly tangled up: well, that's no surprise. Erica Jong relates Fanny's "True History" in three books, all but 500 pages, of pseudo-authentic language. Stylistic mannerisms by Fielding; plot rather by Smollett; research supervised by the late James Clifford and J. H. Plumb (not to mention a research trip to Bath, conducted by Russell Harty, "which was invaluable even though Bath did not finally appear in the novel"). The aim is to be true "to the spirit, if not the letter, of the eighteenth century." One has to say it: Erica Jong has succeeded remarkably well.

The most surprising thing about *Fanny* is that it really does concern the eighteenth century. Readers expecting a sequel to the adventures of Isadora Wing will puzzle the text into convenient shapes, but they will be distorting the feminine imaginative flight-path. Sure enough, the novel has strong feminist overtones: but the sexual politics make only qualified sense in contemporary terms, and Fanny has more in common with the eighteenth-century blacks she encounters than with Isadora, "growing up female in America" during the 1950s and 1960s. Fanny faces repression not just from cultural or socio-economic circumstances, but as a legal entity. Her mode of escape is correspondingly violent; she is on the wrong side of so many laws that a few infractions of polite *mores* wouldn't do much good.

Here then be ripped bodices, witchcraft, piracy, torture, murder, suicide, highway robbery, execution at the yard-arm, madness, nay cruelty to horses. Fanny undergoes most of the varieties of sexual experience, without Isadora's excess of curiosity. While she is a prostitute, she has dealings with Jonathan Swift, whose well-known obsession with nurses leads him to attempt an experiment in bestiality. John Cleland exchanges clothes with her; they both enjoy this, as Fanny feels liberated in men's clothing and spends a lot of the book in drag. Later on, Fanny meets a ship's captain whose repressed homosexuality can only be sublimated by sadism, flagellation, coprophilia and bondage. (He is a slaver, and a slaverer, as one might say, to boot.)

Erica Jong has tried to give us what the blurbs used to call "the entire teeming spectacle". In *Fanny* this means ranging from country estates (Gothic piles, with formal landscaping, in the process of being Palladianized and Picturesquified) to London and the wider world. The city is lovingly evoked in all its sensitive. Cries of "Babylon!" cleave the air as Fanny makes her way from whorehouse to Newgate, risking *omnia citra mortem* as she takes on a male world and a rationalist culture. For there are debts abroad (the slave captain is that, too), apostles of optimistic Shaftesburian philosophy who turn their eyes away from the stench. Nobody could accuse the author of doing so. Along with the street cries and the Mediterranean Monks, the rope-dancers and the fairgrounds, there is a constant undertow of reference to biology. Fanny samples the unreliable abortive devices of the age; she witnesses mutilation and branding. No cosy Hanoverian dawn in this book.

In *How to Save Your Own Life*, Erica Jong described California as a wet dream in the mind of New York. *Fanny* is assuredly better adapted to wet-bobs than dry-bobs. As the heroine reflects:

> What a Profusion of Fluids is the Female Form! Milk, Tears, Blood—these are our Elements. We seem to be forever awash in Humours of divers Sorts. We are made of Waters; we are the Seas, teeming with Life of ev'ry Shape and Colour!

The author extracts a wooey poetic from this dampness, in which a buried equivalence seems to a reason, enlightenment and order with the "dry" masculine power. The crucial act for women is suckling, which puts them in touch with ancient instinctual forces and the radiant mysteries of being. The metaphysic at the heart of the work is coherent, if not especially original.

Plainly, the only way to deal with this noisome world is through comedy. *Fanny* is not often invaded by laughter, but there are moments of high camp: the female pirate Anne Bonny on the prowl with a cutlass in her hand and a cigar in her mouth. Or the episode where Alexander Pope (sadly, premature ejaculation) lets slip the punch-line of his still unmatched *Essay on Man* in discoursing with Fanny on sexual inequality. There are crowds of quotations in the text, knowingly dropped for fellow buffs to pick up at the mention of behest.

In *Fear of Flying* the heroine was engaged in a study of sexual slang in eighteenth-century poetry. Erica Jong's studies are displayed in this to delight Panurge's heart, of words for the male and female genitalia, of synonyms for "whore", it is fair ground turns. The elaborate research seldom obtrudes distractingly, though some of the file-cards of piracy might happily have been scattered to the ocean winds.

Erica Jong states in an afterword that she has "to a large extent confined herself to the language of the period. That is fair comment, and the intrusion of some anachronistic words (*turf*; *dustbin*; *pump-bill* and *focus* as verbs; *sucker*; *bore*; even *bluestocking*) does not seriously interfere with the author's purposes. Slightly more worrying is Pope's "sensitive" expression, which needs another fifty years of sexual development to give it the right meaning. There are a few lapses in idiom: "sheer, irrational Delight" rings false, as does the remark "That must be quite some Letter!". The most serious flaw is the repeated introduction of "Hon" as an item of colloquial English which is wildly out of key with the rest.

The factual background is convincingly presented. There would have been many locks (just as well!) as Fanny sailed from the Chilterns towards London: but there was no such address as 1 Hanover Square in 1724—the house designated had just been built, but numbering had not yet caught on. Finally, the passing vision of "the black and white Cows eating the beautiful grass that belongs to modern Wiltshire—the meadows would then have contained Friesians but the old longhorn breeds of cattle.

But Erica Jong does not claim absolute historical accuracy, and it is something she can afford to forgo. *Fanny* is at all events a much better book than Cleland's original *Memoirs*, with their routine fornication and repetitive devices. Erica Jong has produced a richer work, with more ideas about the human condition, more tonal subtlety, a larger command of narrative, and deeper primal literary impulses. For this Fanny above all wants to *write*—screwing is mostly incidental—and she has an identity beyond the sexual. The book will be thought as inauthentic by people who wouldn't know 1710 from 1750, and put down by critics whose rhetoric of fiction never took them beyond chapter three of their own pompous. For readers who think that popular fiction can be entertaining without being irredeemably silly or vapid, Erica Jong has delivered a convincing piece of proof evidence.

In Gavin Scott's *A Flight of Ideas* (174pp. André Deutsch. £5.95. 0 233 97219 6) Ronald Fenton, an accident-prone assistant in a London gents' outfitters, gets entangled in an intelligence operation and wreaks havoc with allies and enemies: a zany finale he is rescued from a maniacal millionaire's modern castle in the Appalachians by an all-Delaware Symphony Orchestra with its three thousand strong audience. Scaty and amusing slapstick, though a tighter control over the narrative might have been an improvement.

The blessing of steam

By Jan Morris

MICHAEL SATOW and RAY DESMOND:
Railways of the Raj
118pp. Scolar Press. £15.
0 85967 533 5

"Enumerate the Blessings of the British Raj", Indian schoolboys used to be told half a century ago, and the correct answer was: law and order, public health, irrigation works, schools, roads, bridges, telegraphs and railways. In the Indian sub-continent today one Blessing above all the others seems to retain its virtue. The railways the Raj built are as useful, as ubiquitous, as enthralling, almost as well run I dare say as ever they were in the days of empire, and Britons may flatter themselves, I think, that when all else is lost or forgotten the tracks of the Great Indian Peninsula, the East Indian or the North Western will still bear grateful witness to their imperial adventure long ago.

If I were to narrow that original examination question, I would ask my pupils to define the Blessings of the railways themselves, and I would expect to be offered four: the usefulness of them, of course, the beauty, the fun and the symbolism. All are recognized and honoured in *Railways of the Raj*, a lovely but all too short album of prints, paintings and (chiefly) photographs assembled and interpreted by two expert enthusiasts—Michael Satow who was one of the brains behind the new railway museum in Delhi, and Ray Desmond who is Deputy Keeper of the India Office Library and a specialist in early Indian photography.

Sceptical historians used to stigmatize the Indian railways as "strategic lines", implying that they were really mere instruments of military despotism, and indeed there are pictures here of the remarkable railway stations, like Lahore's, which really were built *as forts*, with loopholes and castellations and bomb-proof towers. But the Indian people themselves very soon recognized the special value of the railways, and these pages are rich in images of their everyday usefulness—double-decker carriages crammed with early commuters, Sikh ladies neatly segregated, elephants and camels being taken to work, sahibs, Parsees and Muslims commingling easily as they wait for the train on Byculla platform.

It is true that in the early days the railway companies were disgracefully indifferent to the comfort of their third-class Indian passengers: carriages were horribly crowded, waiting-rooms were simply sheds, and a Mr Sen once complained to the East Indian Railway that "if passengers go to make Cung, that damn guard no wait train five minutes for him". Thieving was as common then as it is now, and the less majestic expresses were often terribly unpunctual. Nevertheless the advantages of railway travel were so soon grasped by the indigenes that by 1904 nearly 200 million third-class passengers were carried annually, and nearly all of them got home safely.

Today the figure is nearer 2,000 million, yet the beauty of the Indian railways miraculously remains. Who could resist the excitement of one of the great expresses streaming across the dun plains, with the long black plume of its smoke against the blue—the Frontier Mail for Ameitsar, perhaps, or the Grand Trunk Express thundering south? Satow and Desmond are clearly susceptible to this old magic, and though their book contains, as it happens, rather too little of it, the photographs being mostly posed or static, there are still a few fine glimpses of the railway aesthetic.

Here, for instance, in the 1890s, a train of the Sind Peshin State Railway crosses the wonderfully fragile-looking bridge at Chappar Rift, on the north-west frontier, dwarfed by the mountains above and behind, infinitesimal against the sky, but still chugging across the 233-foot drop with a fine cocky assurance. Here Lord Curzon's special train "effects a short halt, probably for the distribution of hot water", in Hyderabad in 1902: the sahibs loiter elegantly in the sun, rather as though they are at a point-to-point, the sepoys lining the track stand somewhat self-consciously to attention, and from the cab of the high-funnelled locomotive (4-6-0 A Class, Hyderabad Guaranteed State Railways) the crew surveys the scene with the grand nonchalance of railwaymen everywhere.

Nothing could be much more splendid than Victoria Station, Bombay, which looks in the coloured frontispiece of this book partly like an oriental palace, partly like some vast exhibition pavilion, and partly like Christ Church, Oxford. Nothing could be more charming than Mrs Helen Westropp being conveyed gracefully beneath a parasol on a push-trolley down a Bombay track around the turn of the century. And there is even an irrepressible allure to the little tank-engine, with a bucket hung to the front of it and a big bell ringing perpetually above, which used to pull the malodorous night-soil wagons through the city streets of Jodhpur.

As to the fun of it all, well, consider the enchanting mountain trains that still run up to Ooty and Darjeeling; or the Patiala State Monorail Tramway whose locomotives had big outrigger wheels to keep them upright; or the desperate-looking catch siding by which engines were, generally speaking, refrained from running uncontrolled down the precipitous Bhore Ghat to the distant plain below; or the dizzy thrill of the inspector's trolley hurtling down the steep track from Sheelabagh on the Afghan frontier, the sahibs puffing their cigars and holding on to their swords, the turbanned bearer gesticulating crazily behind; or the mausoleum which the Maharajah Scindia of Gwalior built in his palace grounds for his favourite locomotive, when its pistons were stilled at last; or, I rather shamefacedly conclude, the spectacular collision pictured here in which two 4-4-0 M Class engines, meeting head-on in 1907, climbed, so to speak, up each other's wheels, and were left standing on end in an elephantine embrace.

And so to the last of the railway blessings, the symbolism. It is a blessing, I suppose, of a debatable kind, but as Paul Theroux says it a characteristically elegant and entertaining preface to this book, it is the greatest British imperial symbolism of them all. Earth's proud empires inevitably fade away. Oxymandias lies shattered in his desert. The glory Spain is dust in the air. Venice's long life hath reached its final day, and even Victoria's pomp is, by and large, one with Nineveh and Tyre. But the Railways of the Raj, on the ground as in the pages of this delightful souvenir, go puffing on for ever.

The wifely profession

By Philip Mason

JOHN LAWRENCE and AUDREY WOODWISS (Editors):
The Journals of Honoria Lawrence: India Observed 1837-1854
254pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £10.95.
0 340 23919 0

Among women writers of journals on British India before the Mutiny, the two best so far have been Emily Eden and Fanny Parks. Neither Maria Graham nor Emma Roberts are in the same class. Honoria Lawrence—her journals edited by her great-grand-son—now joins that class and goes to the top of it.

Emily Eden was much praised in the 1930s by writers who saw little merit in the British achievement. She is witty and mildly scornful of everyone and everything, British and Indian alike. She cannot be blamed for not realizing that her brother was a disastrous Governor-General, but she never grew out of the debutantish conviction that there was something comic about everyone not in her own small circle of Whig aristocrats—and the flippant disdain becomes a little tiny.

Fanny Parks, on the other hand, is full of intellectual enthusiasm; she learnt both the Urdu and the Hindi scripts, collected information about Hindu mythology and lived in purdah with a family of Mughal nobles. But her romantic zest for everything picturesque and unusual sometimes borders on the sentimental; and both these ladies are remote from the earthy business of child-bearing and loss that were the stuff of Anglo-Indian life.

Honoria Lawrence is very different. She writes from inside, as a woman almost as deeply committed to India as to her husband and children, a woman of strong loves, vigorous beliefs and unquenchable fortitude. Consider the fidelity and courage of her love affair with Henry Lawrence. They were nineteen and twenty-one when they first met; he decided that she was the only woman in the world for him and she that he was the only man for her. But as a penniless subaltern, he was not "in a position to marry" so he said nothing to her about his feelings and she of course preserved an equally decorous silence. For nine years, during which he was in India and she in Ireland, each was faithful to an undeclared passion; then he wrote to her sister, begging her to make his proposal; Honoria joyfully accepted him.

She was an assiduous writer of journals and letters with a lively sense of the absurd and an unstudied gift for a telling phrase. Of a journey in a litter on a rough road, she wrote: "Fancy yourself in a sieve shaken to try to send you through it . . . had it been possible to be ground small enough first I should have been sifted out on the road the first stage." And, on the same page as that remark, the buffalo milk, which everyone who knows Indian village hospitality will remember, is described as "cooked in some way that gives it a mingled flavour of earth and smoke, with oil floating on the top". She goes on—still on the same page: "It is very pleasant to see the natives in any joint labour of this kind, their good humour and willingness to help one another. Often when I have looked at a set of bearers or boatmen, each taking his turn at the work, without shirking or grumbling, I have thought how differently our own country folk would behave".

That is the key-note to the quality which gives her distinction. "I have always liked India", she wrote. She believed that "a man has his wife and his profession. A woman's profession is to be a wife"—and in that conviction, she learnt a great deal about her husband's work. There could hardly be a better short introduction to India's system of land tenure, revenue and government than a letter of Honoria's to a friend at home, written when Henry was a survey officer in the UP. She lived with him in camp, listened to the disputes he had to settle. Her energy was too great for so slight a body. Early in their married life, she wrote of her fatigue after a long, tiring day, and Henry added in the margin: "Mrs Lawrence is requested not to be so frisky." But she never listened to that gently teasing advice; she never shrank from long journeys in extreme discomfort and she was contantly pregnant. They bore sorrow and loss together. The death of her daughter, not quite nine months old, she recorded in terms that are deeply moving. "When my darling ceased breathing, I thought she said to me: 'Mother, you are often afraid of this dark valley. See how easily I have passed through it.' I felt that indescribable crushing of my bodily frame under the blow that made me think I too was dying. When my darling was gone, I longed to be able to tell the poor natives around me of all that comforted me."

It was in a different spirit that she took Henry Lawrence's removal from the Punjab in favour of his younger brother, a man who was stern, dark and unloving compared with Henry. "I have given all my feelings chloroform", she wrote.

The journals are uneven and contain some passages less interesting than others. But there is much of historical value, comments on the stirring events of the time as well as detailed descriptions of workaday life in camp and the incidentals of travel. But above all Honoria Lawrence may stand as truly representative of the best in Victorian wives in India, just as her husband represented some of the best qualities in the men. She was a brave and loving woman.

The workplace situation

By Brian Harrison

RICHARD PRICE:

Masters, Unions and Men
Work control in building and the rise of labour 1830-1914
355pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.50.
0 521 22882 4

PATRICK JOYCE:

Work, Society and Politics
356pp. Brighton: Harvester. £24.
0 85527 680 0

Whether the present government succeeds or fails in reviving the entrepreneurial ideal, the labour movement's rise to power and influence will remain one of the most remarkable features of twentieth-century Britain. Like all major political developments, it has profoundly influenced the way history has been written, for the newcomer seeks to consolidate his arrival by establishing his pedigree, by acknowledging his predecessors and by locating himself in history.

The first two generations of labour historians—notably the Hammonds, the Webbs, the Coles, Henry Pelling, Eric Hobsbawm and Edward Thompson—established the chronology and bibliography of labour history, and above all got its importance recognized. This task is not yet complete: the Society for the Study of Labour History's *Bulletin* continues to act as a major aid to research, and the *Dictionary of Labour Biography*—a major historical enterprise, whose importance has perhaps not yet been sufficiently acknowledged—is still in progress. Firmly empirical in mood, frequently institutional and sometimes antiquarian in approach, the pioneer labour historians concentrated on clearing the ground; it is for later generations to clarify the significance of their subject and to get its proportions right.

To the pioneers, labour history seemed a heroic story, a "fifty years' march", linear in character, which recorded the inevitably triumphant progress of enlightened pioneers who rolled back the forces of darkness. "Establishment" history was not sufficiently interested in what was going on to supply an adequate corrective. Labour history tends to be written by activists in the labour movement, whereas Conservatives confine themselves to economic, biographical and high political history: is for the Liberal historians, their self-confidence was undermined by the collapse of their Party between the wars.

Even with a major Conservative success like the defeat of the General Strike in 1926, therefore, commemoration fifty years later was allowed to remain in the hands of the Left. The memorial volumes published in 1976 record with admiring regret the weakness of organized labour in that year, and show far less interest in the shrewd deployment of government forces on that occasion, or in Baldwin's astute handling of public opinion. They are still less interested in the values of those who followed Baldwin with conviction in 1926, or in those who believed that the ultimate triumph of the Labour Party required this preliminary defeat. So narrow a focus brings inspirational advantages: "for the compilation of merchant history", wrote Herbert Butterfield, "there is nothing like being content with half the truth".

But British labour's continued setbacks and disappointments in the 1960s and 1970s, together with the inevitable impatience of younger historians with older orthodoxies, are now producing a third generation of labour historians who feel free to indulge themselves in the luxury of disagreement with their predecessors. The brilliant imaginativeness of Hobsbawm and Thompson has been an important influence here. Now that the chronology of labour's onward march has been accurately documented by the first and second generations, a third generation can turn its attention to the reasons for its slow advance, to its damaging indecision about destinations and to the wearing resistance it encountered en route.

These obstructive forces are of course partly located in the Conservative and Liberal parties, and in the ancillary "r" s they developed; these are discussed in K. D. Brown's collection entitled *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, published in 1974. But even more important than overt resistance to labour is the context and mood of working-class daily experience, together with the conflicting organizations and objectives to be found within the labour movement itself—not to mention the widespread conservative and reformist sentiments which are only half-articulated by the political parties. On the principle that British historians tend to write only about their own kind, one might have expected the Conservative historians to be active here, but unfortunately—as Patrick Joyce rightly points out—the students of *Hochpolitik* display a "somewhat patrician reluctance . . . to immerse more than a toe in the troubled waters of social history".

The field is therefore left wide open for the labour historians to conquer new territory, and many of them are now aiming to get behind formal organizations to the daily experience of working people, especially at the workplace. *History Workshop Journal* recently complained in an editorial that trade union history "is derived from the activities of head office rather than from the social relations of the work-place". But this is difficult territory; contentment and acquiescence rarely manifest themselves in the record, and contemporaries rarely regard the quotidian and the routine as worth documenting. Yet these two important books, written from quite different directions, abundantly illustrate that the recreation of the work-place situation is well worth attempting.

Richard Price's introduction shows little patience with what he calls "mainstream, traditional labour history": for him, it is unduly hagiographical, excessively institutional and insufficiently theoretical. He sees the building trades as reasonably representative of organizational change within the nineteenth-century work force, and he charts the mid-Victorian shift of power away from the building site, where labour (whether unionized or not) wielded considerable and direct power, towards the rather more remote (and now more familiar) negotiations between union leaders and employers sitting in committee.

He shows how the trade union legislation of 1871 and 1875 dissolved the paternal ties enshrined in the law of master and servant, and transformed the bonds between employer and employee "to those of pure and simple economics". An atmosphere of mutual give-and-take and of productivity bargaining was thereby created between employers and trade union officials who were increasingly remote from the rank-and-file. The trade union leader became an agent of discipline at the work-place—a difficult role, which required considerable agility and a greatly increased density of union membership within each trade.

Edwardian syndicalism can thus be seen by Price as uniting new theory to old resentments: it aimed at reasserting the shop-floor influence which trade union bureaucratization had so recently eroded. Unfortunately the discussion ends at 1914, despite Price's conviction that the study of the past can illuminate the present. An epilogue, if no more, which linked his argument with present-day conditions would have made an invigorating conclusion to a book which, as it stands, seems oddly truncated.

The brief summary presented here cannot do justice to the densely-packed argument and wealth of documentation in this highly original book, which strikes a nice balance between the empirical and the theoretical, the particular and the general. It suggests numerous areas for further research, and provides much food for thought among those Conservatives who fail to see the present-day trade union movement as the employer's best friend, and who make little effort to ensure that it stays that way.

But Price writes from a viewpoint to the left of organized labour, and his analysis leaves a puzzle behind it. For if the employers gained so much through the mid-Victorian articulation of trade union bargaining methods, why did labour leaders commit themselves so wholeheartedly to the change—particularly as Price explicitly denies himself the escape-route which alleges personal corruption on their part? And how could their rank and file have allowed them to make such a change if early Victorian workplace confrontations with the employer accorded so completely with their outlook and interests? Could it be true that the mid-Victorian trade union leaders were more representative of their rank and file than Price allows, and that the inevitable conflict of interest between capital and labour on the building site which he emphasizes was less inevitable and complete—at least in the eyes of the building workers themselves? Relevant for a discussion of these points would presumably be a pride in craftsmanship and construction, a satisfaction at bringing off major architectural and engineering triumphs (Price gives us no picture of the buildings actually being built), not to mention the more generalized reformist or even conservative values which influenced Victorian building workers along with everyone else.

Patrick Joyce's book is in many ways complementary to Price's, for it focuses directly on the conservative influences affecting a group of Victorian working people whose work-situation might have been expected to radicalize them far more completely than the builders: the textile workers in Lancashire's mill-towns. Convinced that "the human consequences of factory industry were vastly more subtle and elusive than is so often thought", Joyce ventures even more firmly into the work-place than Price, for it is there, rather than in trade union structures, that Joyce locates the origins of Victorian working-class reformism. He thinks that those historians who ascribe it to a "labour aristocracy" are preoccupied with "a problem that exists rather less in nineteenth-century than in twentieth-century historiography".

Stressing the factory master's close integration with the local landed élite, with local educational institutions and with religious life, Joyce describes the community life which grew up in and around the factory in the mill-towns, and provides occasional comparative glimpses of Yorkshire's textile communities. Only the late-Victorian advent of tram and bicycle broke up this tightly-knit employer-dominated society.

Always alert to the importance of symbolism in Victorian popular culture, Joyce claims that "there was no more significant event" than the coming-of-age of the mill-owner's son, when the simultaneous rejuvenation of dynasty and factory was celebrated. The close integration between working-class family life and the hierarchies within the Lancashire cotton-mill reinforced a commitment to the employer which was reflected in voting behaviour. It is a commitment which pervades the whole of the work-force, and not just a supervisory or unionized élite, and employees voted with their employers as much from choice as from coercion.

Joyce cannot draw on internal evidence about the realities of factory life to compare with Alfred Williams's remarkable *Life in a Railway Factory* (1915), yet somehow he manages to re-create, in his remarkable fifth and sixth chapters, the character of daily life in the mill, and to bring out the fact that a factory was very much more than a mere place of toil. The Lancashire cotton-mill became the centre of a radiating cultural influence, a place of recreation, a starting-off point for excursions and outings, a place where work "got under the skin of life" and which "generated a life of its own". Here there is deference without servility or aristocracy, awareness of class without class conflict. Popular Toryism readily took root in such soil; Conservatives were less coy than Liberals about capitalizing on the immense importance in working-class life of the local, the concrete, the communal, the recreational, the symbolic.

Joyce's book is somewhat marred by careless proof-reading, and the tortuousness of its style at times positively demands the summaries which appear at the end of each chapter. It is not always clear what the arguments are he aims to refute, nor what weapons he is deploying in the combat. He is at his best when he moves on from confronting the Marxists and reaches his central chapters, where he brilliantly describes factory society "as it was".

His concentration on the 1870s rather than the 1880s probably leads him to underestimate the popular impact which imperialism could make. It is certainly wrong to claim that "for a working population whose attention was so firmly fixed on the immediate and the concrete the appeal of the far-flung and exotic fell on deaf ears". It is precisely the local resonances of imperialism which lent it such strength. In other contexts, Joyce rightly stresses the cultural importance of the Sunday school, as a workshop for articulating the pervasive ideal of the Christian Soldier; yet imperialism was important here too, as a sounding-board for the missionary and the explorer, with their exotic contemporary glamour. Nor did the supply of war-making and the romance of empire lack their local manifestations, given the popularity of the volunteers and the vast bulk of letters to relatives which crossed the oceans.

In his concluding chapter, Joyce rightly stresses the gains socialism made from the late-Victorian break-up of the factory community, but he assumes that this in itself dooms the Edwardian "new Liberalism" whose vitality before 1914 some historians nowadays emphasize. Yet Liberal leaders were well-versed at annexing and neutralizing potentially threatening groups on their left: a party which had tamed O'Connell, John Bright, Parnell, Joseph Chamberlain (up to 1886) and Lloyd George (up to 1916) would hardly see Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden as a serious threat. But for the events of the First World War, why should this taming process suddenly have come to a halt? The devotees of *Hochpolitik* may even here have the last word.

But it would be wrong to leave *Work, Society and Politics* on a note of disagreement: it is a remarkable and original first book—outstanding in its subtlety of perception, its documentary range and its easy-mindedness of approach. It has three features in common with *Masters, Unions and Men*: both books clearly demonstrate the important contribution which well-documented and perceptively-interpreted research on a limited area can make towards illuminating major trends within a whole society. Joyce's analysis of the Blackburn polibooth in 1868, Price's delvings into the Clapham archives of the Union of Construction and Allied Technicians' Trades, get us further forward than a host of generalizations based on secondary sources.

Both books rightly stress the interdependence of "social" and "political" history. Joyce demonstrates that the historian of Chartism who embarks on social history may end up writing about Henry Broadhurst, Ramsay MacDonald and Keir Hardie rather more than in Professor Price's book—despite their central importance in consolidating the parliamentary welfare gradualist direction which British labour eventually took—his aim is not to jettison political history, only to extend comprehension of the social base on which it thinks it rests.

Both books also illustrate the stimulus which sociology can give to the social historian—not as a source of unnecessary jargon, nor as a set of rigid formulas to be mechanistically applied, but as a stimulating source of ideas and perspectives which enliven empirical work. Joyce owes much to Durkheim and to the functionalists, and Price's dust-jacket describes the book as "an exercise in the history of the industrial sociology of workplace relations and conflict". It would be course be wrong to apply such labels to nineteenth-century conditions: sociological ideas derived from a quite different context lay the implication here is far from uncritical. Sociology perhaps encourages a certain wonderment, a certain spelling out of the obvious, in Price's introduction, but neither book suffers from sociological jargon, and both continually and effectively relate ideas and interpretation to their detailed empirical research.

The interpenetration between industrial sociology and Price's notion of social history is so close that at times one wonders whether history in the 1980s is doomed to break up so that nineteenth-century British labour historians, for example, would have more in common with industrial sociologists than with historians studying other aspects of nineteenth-century society. Gladstone and Disraeli appear in Price's book as mere notes in the text, for instance, and John Bright does not appear in the index at all: the historian's preoccupation with the totality of contemporary institutions, personalities and institutions is not seen by him—in this book, at least—as being of central importance. But it is a testimony to the versatility and sensitivity of Price and Joyce's book that the far-off ideal of "total history" seems not so elusive after all.

The Honourable Baron Ephraim Lopez Pereira D'Aguilar. The picture is taken from The History of Islington, *by John Nelson, first published in 1811, and now republished in a facsimile edition introduced and edited by Julia Melvin (443pp. Philip Wilson Publishers and Somerset Field Press Ltd. £30. 0 85667 104 5). In it we learn of the circumstances of D'Aguilar's "Starvation Farm": "the pittance of food allotted to the wretched cattle was always apportioned, and frequently given by the Baron's own hand; and so strange and unaccountable was the eleemosynary of the man in this respect, that he suffered nearly the whole of his cattle to languish and die by inches for want of provender".*

Friends of fascism

By Stephen Koss

RICHARD GRIFFITHS:

Fellow Travellers of the Right
British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-39
406pp. Constable. £12.50.
0 09 463460 2

JAMES J. BARNES and PATIENCE P. BARNES:

Hitler's Mein Kampf in Britain and America
A Publishing History 1930-39
158pp. Cambridge University Press. £8.50.
0 521 22691 0

The 1930s recede inexorably into history without losing either their fascination or their appeal to conscience. Issues and events that remain perplexing, even seemingly inexplicable, continue to churn up disturbing parallels. In such areas as economics and foreign policy, the controversies of that period still revverberate, conveniently invoked to serve an assortment of preconceived purposes. It is all very well for James and Patricia Barnes in *Hitler's Mein Kampf in Britain and America* to conclude by quoting Santayana's shopworn dictum that "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". But, as they are demonstrably aware, recollection does not suffice. If valid lessons are to be discerned, much less properly learned, we require investigations as sensitive as their own as an aid—and, in no small measure, as a corrective—to memory.

Scholars have been attracted in ever-increasing number to this "low, dishonest decade", with the result that its themes have been clarified and put into perspective. The interpretations of Claud Cockburn and Malcolm Muggeridge, so persuasive in their day, have given way to a less impressionistic view, intended to understand rather than to indict. Each of the present books illustrates this trend and makes a notable contribution. Backed by resourceful research, they do not dispel the image of a "devil's decade" so much as propound a new demonology, with ignorance as its chief characteristic.

Boasting an admirable grasp of concurrent developments across the Channel, Richard Griffiths is splendidly equipped to examine British attitudes in a wider context. His knowledge compels him to reject conspiracy theories, and to recognize "the very variety of motivation . . . which creates the difficulty of making too many generalizations" about contemporaries who pleaded the case for Hitler's Germany. Many of them prove to have been well-meaning individuals, determined above all to avoid the dreaded prospect of war. Others derived their sympathies from a despondency with democracy, which had revealed its apparent incapacity to sustain a healthy capitalism and promote a vigorous patriotism. Although Colin Holmes has recently shown) anti-Semitism was not an unknown quantity in England, either in East End streets or West End drawing-rooms, its practitioners tended to dissociate themselves from Nazi "excesses". So long as possible, however, these apologists for the willingly suspended disbelief. A hard core, who contrived to ignore the heresy of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, persisted in their pro-Germanism through the outbreak of war.

Some of the attitudes taken up by people in the thirties now appear almost unbelievable", concedes Griffiths, whose singular achievement has been to make those attitudes credible, if hardly creditable. In an enthralling survey, prefaced by an account of Anglo-German support for Mussolini's fascist experiments, he deals with the men, women, fringe organizations, periodicals, all ostensibly qualifying as "fellow travellers of the Right." Tracing the evolution of their thought and contacts over the decade, he points up the inconsistencies and often the utter illogic of his subjects, whose significance outweighed their influence. Sir Oswald Mosley, usually portrayed as his own estimation as a dominant figure, gets effectively whittled down to size; indeed, it is suggested that the distrust he inspired might have militated against the cause of British fascism.

Despite Robert Skidelsky's calculation that the membership of the British Union of Fascists continued to grow into 1939, he tellingly argues that, by that late hour, enthusiasm for Germany was restricted to "extremist political groups", isolated and hysterical.

The vast majority of the "fellow travellers" hurriedly disembarked when Germany's expansionist designs became obvious. Strategic considerations, and not German persecution of the Jews nor any other aspect of Hitler's domestic policy, were therefore the decisive factor. The thought is sobering and, as documented here, wholly convincing.

What is somewhat less convincing is the designation of these people, occasionally labelled "odd" or "strange", as representatives of the "Right", collectively dignified by a capital letter. Admittedly, a disproportionate number were Tories with aristocratic connections, who moved in the most exclusive social circles. Not a few, incidentally, were American-born. A sizeable contingent was involved with Ulster Unionism. Members of the royal family, led (or misled) by the Duke of Windsor, were likewise prominent. To describe these types, along with certain backbench Conservative MPs, as right-wing is fair enough.

But Bernard Shaw, whose play *On the Rocks* (1933) is cited to good effect, defies easy classification, as do Lord Lothian, "Tom" Jones, an array of Church leaders, and those like Lord Noel-Buxton, who passionately advocated disarmament. Clifford Sharp, the drink-sodden ex-editor of the *New Statesman*, accepted hospitality from Goebbels in exchange for an unpublishable paean to the Nazi regime. Lloyd George, the captive of his vanity, travelled by motor-cade to the Berghof along his own idiosyncratic route. Again in response to the 1936 Rhineland coup, the Liberal *News Chronicle* and the Socialist *Herald* were at one with the Rothermere press. That Rosslyn Mitchell, who had captured Paisley for Labour by defeating Asquith in 1924, should have affiliated with the Link (a non-partisan group that was most overtly pro-Nazi in the Ulster sense of the regions) is yet a further indication that the distinction between left and right does not really hold. More a hindrance than a help, it may best be regarded as an irrelevance.

This structural mechanism aside, *Fellow Travellers of the Right* succeeds in illuminating peripheral areas of opinion and the shades between them. The views which it catalogues were sometimes wildly ludicrous, especially when pseudo-scientific racial theories were advanced. Yet they were held with a fanaticism too chilling to be derided, let alone dismissed. The gullibility of Ernest Tennant ("Our Press should pay more attention to the constructive side of the Hitler movement") must be considered alongside the effusions of Edmund Blunden and Enid Bagnold, the obscurantism of Wyndham Lewis alongside the rabid anti-Bolshevism of Lady Houston, the homegrown Hitlerism of Lord Redesdale ("Perve" to the Mitford brood) alongside the self-demeaning snobbery of "Chips" Channon. Wisely, Griffiths has declined to make too much of the Cliveden Set, whose importance has been magnified by the glitter of its personalities. Nor, unlike Ribbentrop, has he fallen under the spell of Lord Londonderry (the "Londonderry Herr"), whom Lady Astor peevishly disdained as "bad company". Instead he has concentrated more constructively on Arnold Leece, Mrs Nesta Webster, Sir Arnold Wilson, and Francis Yeats-Brown, all colourful and culpable in their own right.

In 1933, a year after he had been appalled to observe the "drug-sellers and inverts" of Berlin, Yeats-Brown reviewed the first English translation of *Mein Kampf*. "Behind the Nazi bombast", he wrote, "there is an ideal of brotherhood, and a soul behind the flaunting swastikas." He had read an abridged—Griffiths calls it an "expurgated"—version of the text, a complete translation being unavailable until 1939. James and Patricia Barnes relate the extraordinary reasons in a genuine cloak-and-dagger story.

Published by the London firm of Hurst and Blackett, a subsidiary of the Hutchinson Publishing Group, the 1933 edition of *Mein Kampf* did not identify its translator on the title page. Griffiths has reasonably assumed this person to have been James Murphy, whose biography of Hitler appeared the following year and who was then employed by the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin. In fact, the anonymous translator was Edgar Trevelyan Stratford Dugdale, husband of Blanche ("Baffy"), the devoted niece and biographer of A. J. Balfour. A dedicated champion of Zionism, which compounds the irony, she had urged Dugdale to undertake the project on commercial as well as instructional grounds: "while all the world is interested in Hitler just now the Jews are specially and painfully so—on account of the Anti-Semitism which is part of the Nat. Socialist programme".

Dugdale's abridgment, from which the German authorities obtained the deletion of certain unspecified passages, presented Hitler as "less a fanatic and more of a shrewd politician". Claim Weizmann, who worked intimately with Mrs Dugdale, privately protested when *The Times* serialized four extracts from "a literary production so abominable". Leonard Stein, his Zionist associate, was still more incensed: "The reader who is offered these extracts can have no idea of the utter dreariness, of the incredible intellectual crudity of the original." Obviously, a full translation was necessary if Hitler's aggressive instincts and diseased mentality were to be understood. But contractual entanglements, coupled with opposition from the Jewish community, posed obstacles both in Britain and the United States.

For all its deficiencies, the Dugdale version served a purpose. The Duchess of Atholl, though "horrified to find that it was only about one-third of the original, and that all the bellicose passages had been so watered down as to have lost their meaning", was sufficiently provoked to recant her support for Franco and, as Griffiths recounts, waged a spirited debate with Lord Queenborough in the *Morning Post*, where "she quoted from *Mein Kampf* to show the nature of the Nazi regime". Foreign Office personnel began to pay greater attention to the book after July 1935, when Alfred Rosenberg celebrated it as the "unshakeable basis of National Socialist feeling and thought" (Goering, by contrast, insisted that it was merely the Führer's "Bible for internal and not external affairs". Did Neville Chamberlain, as A. L. Rowse categorically stated, refuse either to "read *Mein Kampf* or . . . listen to anybody who had"? The Barnesses, relying on scholarly testimony from David Dilks (who is preparing a life of Chamberlain) and D. C. Watt, cautiously dissent from Rowse's pronouncement. They acknowledge, however, that "there is no firm evidence that either Stanley Baldwin or Neville Chamberlain ever read the Dugdale abridgment"; Franklin D. Roosevelt, however, inscribed his personal copy with a severely critical comment.

James Murphy, whom Griffiths mistakenly identifies as the translator of the 1933 version, was instead responsible for the later unexpurgated edition. A journalist with a chequered career, he persuaded the Germans in 1934 to sanction "a fluent and idiomatic translation of the full text". Thereafter, he ran foul of his sponsors, whom he displeased on one occasion by refusing to translate one of Hitler's tirades against Anthony Eden. Barred from Germany, where he had been working under conditions of mounting tension, he sent his wife to Berlin in 1938 to retrieve the manuscript he had left behind. Her mission coincided with the *Kristallnacht* barbarities.

Hurst and Blackett were resolved to proceed with publication of Murphy's translation, all the more because two rival American firms planned "unauthorized" versions of the whole. The Barnesses meticulously compare the differences of emphasis and syntax between one published version and another. In addition, they unravel the legal technicalities between governments, between publishing houses, and between authors and agents. Most evocatively, they describe the misconceived campaigns to block these independent ventures. Houghton *Mifflin* Company was accused of "an attempt to cash in on the misery and catastrophe of an important section of the human family" and faced the threat of a boycott from the New York City Board of Education for having disseminated Hitler's hate-mongerings. Prominent American citizens petitioned President Roosevelt to halt publication. "To confidence", a Houghton Mifflin spokesman told Roosevelt that there had been "no end of trouble over the book—protests from the Jews by the hundreds, and not all of them from the common run of shad."

With Weimar colours inappropriately decorating the jacket, the Houghton Mifflin edition rushed into print. It carried a promotional endorsement from Dorothy Thompson, who, "as a liberal and democrat", declared: "The reading of this book is a duty for all who would understand the fantastic era in which we live, and particularly it is the duty of all who cherish freedom, democracy and the liberal spirit. Let us know what it is that challenges our civilization."

But there were those who preferred not to know or, worse, who wished to keep others from knowing. Not all of the would-be censors were in Berlin. Some of the most vociferous were in British and American cities, where they had more concern for the royalties Hitler might collect than for setting the record straight. Legal and moral arguments, mutually impinging, have since continued to limit circulation. West German officials have admitted ambivalence. On the one hand they did allow it to remain in people of what Hitler stood for, and yet, on the other, they did not want people to forget". Members of Anglo-American Jewish communities "could not help feeling that ready access to *Mein Kampf* would only promote anti-semitism and play into the hands of post-war Fascist organizations".

Richard Griffiths's study should be required reading for those who believe that ignorance, under any circumstances, can deter evil. Reciprocally, the Barnesses' exercise in "publishing history" goes far to explain how and why ignorance was allowed to persist. Both impressive on their own terms, these two books fortuitously complement each other and thereby make us wiser after the event. Better late than never.

Ides

When it occurred, it happened in such a way
as to seem the inevitable fruit of years planning;
everyone involved could be said to have had his say,

and nothing remained but to set the thing running
with a carefully primed fuse or a board meeting
constitutionally called with a proper quorum.

The clockwork machinery rolled quietly ticking
from the conference table into the packed forum
of the mundane and predictable. When it exploded

people continued to go about regular errands
taking decisions they still thought they decided.
Scarcely glanced up at where on the balcony

all the conspirators stood flourishing clean hands.

John Gohorry

The naming of urban parts

By Julian Symons

L. E. SISSMAN:
Hello Darkness
The Collected Poems
294pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
0 436 4 6620 1

The life of L. E. Sissman can be briefly told. He was born in 1928, went to Harvard in 1944 as an overgrown, overweight (six foot four and over fourteen stone) and precocious student, was rusticated two years later, readmitted, elected Class Poet, graduated *cum laude*, married at twenty, and—went into advertising. In this occupation he had a successful career as "creative director" in more than one agency. He was divorced, and remarried at thirty. His first collection of poems, *Dying: An Introduction*, appeared in 1968. The too-marked appropriateness of the title was based on the discovery three years earlier that he had Hodgkin's disease. He lived thereafter under sentence of death, his life prolonged to 1976 by "hospitalization, radiation and chemotherapy", to quote his editor Peter Davison, and he produced two more collections of poems.

The early work that earned him the label of Class Poet at Harvard has been omitted from this volume, and in his early advertising years Sissman seems to have been poetically barren. The poems here date from the 1960s and early 1970s, and for most of this time Sissman was working against the prevailing grain of American poetry. "The moral terrorists who dominated the poetry business of the time withheld their accolades", as Mr Davison says with a touch of overstatement, and it is true that Sissman was altogether out of sympathy with the "confessional" poetry of the 1960s.

It was not merely the confessional nature of it that found no echo in his writing, but also that general American tendency towards a loosening of forms, the Black Mountaineering and Williamsesque view that "the significance of the syllable, the sense of breathing" was the important thing, and that "the heart is the base of the measure of rhythms for all men" (Robert Creeley, quoting Charles Olson), and so for all poetry.

Most of Sissman's poems were written in iambic pentameter, many acknowledged a debt to Eliot for whom confessional poets, Black Mountaineers and followers of Williams had equally little use, and they were often direct accounts of things seen and experienced, quite consciously marshalled and shaped by a witty intelligence. In England during those years poetic ideas ran differently, and an English Sissman would no doubt have been a "Movement" poet. In his work a wistful eye is often cast at writers and writing across the Atlantic. In elegiac poems about Orwell and Evelyn Waugh, tributes to and imitations of Empson, quotations from Larkin, a poem dedicated to Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest.

But what we have is American Sissman, and what was that? The prevailing note is conversational, rather Browningesque in its energy and chatty enthusiasm, the external subjects are everything that comes under an observant man's eye in Boston (where much of the poet's life was spent) and New York. The first lines of the first poem, which is called "Going Home, 1945" but was obviously written much later, catch the tone:

"En route aboard the Twentieth Century
Limited", says the club-car notepaper.
With a glad cry, I take a seat and write
Six crested notes to six deserving friends
Who need a lesson in my eminence,
Or on whose female persons I have vain
designs.

This section of the poem is called "Getting There", and it is followed by brisk sketches of life at home, the poet's room, his parents, an evening with a date, another with an old chum, a portrait of the town. Then departure, uneasy goodbyes, off again on the Twentieth Century. It is all neat, accomplished, good about details like the unpacked marmalade for his return. "Your grandmother will just be sick. She got it from Dundee." "Ship it." "It's glass, I can't." "Here comes the train . . ". If there are times when one thinks that this visit home might be more effectively put down as a short story, isn't there often a feeling that Browning's verse novels would do better as prose?

The poem is characteristic in its accomplishment and its assurance: which is far from saying that it is all Sissman has to offer. He is splendid at rendering the outsides of things, as in "A Day in the City (Boston-New York)", which gives us "A Taste of Queens" ("Where caravans of Carey busses ply/From Flushing to this caravanserai") to the fifty-storey-high air of the Annair Tower, "rare/As the rich breath of cowhunt unicorns", on to East Forty-Second Street. The naming of places that goes on in the titles—Gore Hall, Adams House, Charles Street, Inman Square, State Street, Central Park South, Lutchow's, Kerwin's—is multiplied many times in the poems themselves, which might be called a hymn to American urban man. There are times when this naming has an air of desperation, as though Sissman felt a need for reassurance about the stability, and even the existence, of the world in which he lived. Certainly no other recent poet has looked so closely or lovingly at the details of life as experienced by intelligent and sophisticated men and women in the Eastern United States.

Many pieces look back either to a personal past, in particular youth at Harvard, or as in the ambitious "A War Requiem" try to give us a view of history. This piece, the longest in the book, is a series of sharp epigrammatic poems that begin with the slump and the Depression, touch in a Spanish Civil War scene shown in reactions at home to the death of a member of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, and continue through poems running thirty years on from 1939 to show what people became and what living is like. The poem is also in part autobiographical, dealing with incidents in Sissman's life as a vacuum-cleaner salesman and copy editor in a publishing firm, before he landed in advertising. Here is the beginning of a salesman's day, labelled "East Cambridge 1949":

Behind the stacked extent of Kendall Square
There is a little slum; I'll take you there.
Laden with my black brush-filled salesman's case,
Perhaps a mop or two, and, on my face,
The first sweat of the day. This is the place
We start: a neat tan toy house, gingerbread
Proud of its peaky eaves. The lady's in.
She's German, tiny, old, respectable,
Not buying anything. Next door, a tall
Blue tenement hangs open. In its hall
The fumes of urine and the fractured wall
Don't augur well for brush men.

The poems examine this and other kinds of life in detail. Sissman did not write much about his advertising experience or about his illness, but what is put down convinces. The last poems in the book, particularly "Homage to Clutha: A Hospital Suite", are moving because they apply the flat exactness of Sissman's usual style to the miseries of hospital life:

If Hell abides on earth this must be it:
This too-bright-lit-at-all-hours-of-the-day-
And-night recovery room, where nurses flit
In stroboscopic steps between the beds
All check by jowl that hold recoverers
Suspended in the grog of half-damped pain
And tubularities of light-blue light.

Sissman was evidently a courageous man, and as a poet deserved a better press than he got during his lifetime. (In this country he remains very little known, something which this book may help to change.) Yet his work has limitations which prevent agreement with those who would put him in the first rank of modern American poets, with Lowell and Berryman. He used the iambic pentameter he favoured forcefully and well, yet the result does cause some monotony. In many places it would be possible to shift whole sections of one poem into another without the fact being apparent. The measure tends also to impose its own restrictions, which the poet rarely (if any apparent effort to trip so that a Sissman line is chatty, comic or rhetorically ful, but is rarely delicate or

He is also a very literary whose pieces too often have ing point in another poet comically and half-seriously "A pleasure dome of kings Watteaus made", "I wa lonely as a cloud in Poyle's is nice. Her Roman eye chair she sits in, like a throne". The dozens of lines are meant to be recognized cosy little jokes, but they jokes that lessen any effect may be called poetic, and "Spanish throne" is said next line to be "A steel on dismaying. It is poetry that sold short by such determined efforts to be funny and times with a cleverness moved from that of advertising copy.

There is no doubt about talent, or about the unusual he brought to poetry, yet the kind of talent that brighter and freeber than individual poems than single poems are seen in bulk. decade must have been weak, even agonizing, but poems easy. All of his writing is polished, but he was possibly the victim of his own fluency, ing comfortably within the and metres he had developed, rarely trying to look beyond

On the subject of lechery

By Alistair Elliot

DEREK PARKER (Editor):
An Anthology of Erotic Verse
359pp. Constable. £8.50.
0 09 463500 5

In the second circle of Hell, where Dante imagined the lustful, buffeted through the air by an endless storm, Francesca da Rimini tells how she was first kissed by her companion, who had been brother-in-law. They had been reading. The book was about Gallehault, the medieval pander who had guided Lancelot and Guinevere through the universal obstacles of embarrassment and obligation. In fact, the book was itself a Gallehault, a Pandarus, and when they read about the longed-for smile, kissed by so great a lover, they were overcome: "that day we read no further in it"—an echo of "Dante" (still a green character in Canto V) faints dead away with sympathy. Meanwhile, however, Dante the writer of the poem is silently taking the loftier and more comprehensive view that a carnal sinner knows what he/she is doing and has decided he can afford the price. These points are made simply by having Francesca use the conventional language of thirteenth-century love poetry. Her weak phrases—"this one, who never shall be parted from me", "love, that excuses no-one loved from loving"—take on a horrible ironic strength from their context: Hell is precisely the place from which "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars" is always absent. She had thought "love" was everything, and wanted it to last for ever; she got what she asked for, and it turns out to be everlasting *misaria*.

We have much coarser stimulants available today than were provided by that poor medieval romancer, and disapproval of them is now expressed less magisterially; but one recognizes the themes: erotica are corrupting, and they are "immature". Both of those charges mean *something* (to us—we are touched by evocations of desire, and we recognize that the ecstasy is a step out of or escape from the chronically unsensual but very interesting "real" world. But although literature has to be "about" something, it is mere barbarism to think that the "subject" is more than an ingredient: the pleasure to be had from literature is something more like the pleasure of recognizing the cook from the dish, as it were the Larkinism of the conclusion to "Talking in Bed" (not an erotic poem at all, in spite of its location). In fact, it seems that if a piece of writing is really erotic, then it is not literature: it tastes too much of salt to be edible, or too alcoholic to quench our thirst. Is Dryden erotic when he makes Chloris say "Throw me at least upon a cleaner place" (in his pastoral "Daphnis. From Theocritus Idyll. 27")? Or is Pope erotic when he says, in "Sober Advice from Horace", in a passage on sexual snobbery: "What push'd poor *Rillis* on th' Imperial whore?/ 'Twas but to be where Charles had been before,"

It is, in fact, rather hard to decide, sometimes, whether words are intended to arouse the reader or not. The following is from an instructive poem for bridegrooms, *The OEconomy of Love* (I quote from the second edition, 1745):

Forthwith discover to her dazzled sight
The stately Novelty, and to her Hand
Usher the new Acquaintance. She perhaps
Averse will coldly chide, and half afraid,
Blushing, half pleas'd, the tumid Wonder view
With Neck retorted and oblique Regard;
Nor quite her curious Eye indulging, nor
Refraining quite.

John Armstrong was a newly graduated Edinburgh physician when this first appeared, anonymously, and though Armstrong later became a friend of Wilkes I believe the poem is as straight as his later one on preserving health in general. Certainly, Erasmus Darwin was merely versifying an impeccably scientific thought when he wrote this (*Temple of Nature*, Canto III):

Warm from its cell the tender infant born
Feels the cold chill of Life's aerial morn;
Seeks with spread hands the bosoms velvet orbs,
With closing lips the milky fount absorbs;
And, as compress'd the dulcet streams distill,
Drinks warmth and fragrance from the living rill;
Eyes with mute rapture every waving line,
Prints with adoring kiss the Elephian shrine,
And learns erelong, the perfect form confess'd,
IDEAL BEAUTY from its Mother's breast.

If this is erotic, so is a two-backed cloud. Eroticism *can't* be in the rounded eye of the obsessed reader. But I don't think it can be in the self-confessed intention of the author either: Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" is surely not erotic—it's far too interesting in other ways.

This seems to be the great difficulty of erotic verse (struggling to exist at all, and much worse off than erotic prose): you cannot make it only out of erotic materials because that would be too boring, like a one-ingredient plateful of food; and if there is anything else mixed in, it stops being erotic as soon as the connoisseur shows any skill. There seem in fact to be no strictly erotic poems of value, because a bit of polish magically turns the stuff into near bawdy at one end, and irrelevant music at the other.

Derek Parker wisely admits the difficulty in the title of his *Anthology of Erotic Verse*: erotic poetry is in short supply, and to find it you have to abandon scruples about printing whole poems. He gives us bits of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and of *Hero and Leander* (a rather taking episode in which Neptune fancies Leander), and of Chapman's attractive modlevalizing *Ovids Banquet of Sense*, and then his stock of long poems runs out, unless you count a Donne elegy (48 lines) and various versions from Ovid.

It is the inclusion of a very odd selection of poetry from other literatures that first makes one wonder how hard Parker has been looking: from French, for example, he gives an eight-line thing by Toulet, but nothing by Mallarmé, whose *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* Verlaine was so embarrassed to read to his Dutch hostesses. In fact, the only French poets here are Toulet, Eluard, Apollinaire and Baudelaire. And did the Russians and Scandinavians (not to mention the Asians and Africans) write no erotic verse? At that rate, Germans and Czechs can be congratulated for getting in at all (one poem each, by Goethe and by Bartušek).

Then, once you start getting worried about misprints (in poems by Rochester, Swift, Tom Moore, Hopkins, Yeats, MacDiarmid, Ray Campbell, Neruda, Betjeman and Bartušek—most of them conspicuous because they make the text unmetrical), you find yourself wondering if the editor picked these misprints up from other anthologies. Some (like the one in Tom Moore's delightful "Did Not") come from W. Cole's *Erotic Poetry* (1964), which must have saved Parker a lot of work: he has five poems from Cole in a row, three times over, and there are many others that do not happen to fall together. (Its finds are arranged chronologically. *All* the Greek poems at the beginning of the book are in Peter J. Green's *The Greek Anthology* (1978), but most of them have been more or less retranslated by Parker. Readers are entitled to conclude he knows classical and modern Greek—Cavafy—but not as Solomonic Hebrew, Spanish, French and German). Two translations of mine were used long ago, paid for, so I have no complaint, but I can imagine Sappho and Catullus (both omitted) asking what the hell were Dioloros Zonas and Antipater of Thessalonika. Anthology is even more vulnerable to the selection, and he (or she) contributes an unconscionable deal of sixth-rate stuff composed around 1700. Surely it is miles better than the anthology of the Penguin Underground Classic *Poets of Albion* (1969) that Parker picks up with—and he does seem to have found Anon's pieces himself. Perhaps no, "As Oyster Nan stood by her tub" and many of the others (from da Sola Pinto and Rodway's *Common Muse*, 1957.)

One can scarcely blame Derek Parker for lacking the rarest of literary talents, that of the editor-anthologist, but his grubby collaborations and laziness are not graceful. The most amazing thing in the book is probably the inclusion of Harry Ploughman's hope the Society of Jesus sends Parker to task for their—but it's also annoying that, like John Wain's scrappy (but not quite as bad) anthology *Making Love* (1979) it spoils the market for any reader interesting attempt on this difficult subject. But let us hope that there can be still he one—perhaps called the *Oxford Book of Sensuous and Sensual Verse?*—which should be arranged by subject, or even alphabetically, but not chronologically, and should not use modernized spelling. It would contain (and better) poems by homosexuals and women, and be well illustrated financed to afford not just Herrick, but the living authors "I choke on such marine images" (Philip Larkin) as well "to help you with your brassiere/a tender blister needing to be dressed" (Craig Raine) "Stroked nylon crackled over my and bum/Like granny's wool stuck on Hilversum" (Tony Harrison). It could start its erotic section with a charming sonnet by Sir John Davies that Derek Parker is the to anthologize and which one "For all is but a little locker-

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Regenerating Lamarck

By John Maynard Smith

E. J. STEELE:
Somatic Selection and Adaptive Evolution
On the Inheritance of Acquired Characters
209pp. Croom Helm. £8.95.
0 7099 2309 0

In essence, only two scientific theories have ever been suggested to account for organic evolution. The first, that of Lamarck, is loosely referred to as "the inheritance of acquired characteristics". Individuals do, during their lifetimes, adapt to their environments, for example, by developing particular muscles, learning skills, adapting to high altitudes and acquiring immunity to diseases. It was Lamarck's proposal that progressive improvements occur in evolution because such adaptations occurring in parents are, at least in part, transmitted to children. The second theory, Darwin's, explains progressive evolution by arguing that those individuals which happen, perhaps by chance, to have heritable characteristics which favour survival and reproduction will pass those characteristics to their children.

Darwin himself was only a half-hearted Darwinist. He accepted Lamarck's idea also, and even invented a process, pangenesis, which could account for it; he supposed that particles, or pangenes passed from all parts of the body to the germ cells to convey information about acquired adaptations. Most biologists today accept Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection, but reject his, and Lamarck's theory of inheritance; in this they follow the lead first clearly given by Weismann, who (with some exceptions I shall mention in a moment) denied the possibility that changes, good or ill, occurring in the body, or "soma", could cause corresponding changes in the germ cells.

What E. J. Steele has attempted in his book is to suggest a mechanism, consistent with modern molecular biology, which could underlie Lamarckian types of inheritance. His idea is this. The body is made of cells, all of which initially contain genetic material identical to that in the germ cells. Suppose, however, random genetic differences, "somatic mutations", arise between the body cells. Some changes will enable a cell to multiply more rapidly, so that many cells will carry the newly arisen mutation. Suppose now that there is some process, comparable with Darwin's pangenesis, whereby genes can be carried from body cells to germ cells, and there be incorporated into the chromosomes. The result would be that changes arising in body cells could be transmitted to the next generation.

Why should Steele imagine that such a process occurs? He argues mainly from the facts of immunology. Here, the central observation is that an individual rabbit (or mouse, or man) can produce "antibodies" (which are protein molecules) capable of binding to a very large variety of "antigens" (which, crudely, are substances the body is not used to). The capacity is useful in resisting disease. The number of different kinds of antibodies an individual can produce is probably many millions, and so it is unlikely (but not impossible) that genes specifying all possible antibodies exist in the germ line.

The common opinion is that variability is generated during development, perhaps by mutation, and that those cells which, by mutation, acquire the ability to make the needed antibody then multiply. If so, Steele has the first part of his mechanism—an adaptation brought about by mutation and selection between cells. There is much less reason to suppose that genes are carried from somatic cells and incorporated into germ cells (and powerful reasons to think that, if it happens at all, it must be a rare event), but molecular processes are known which make such transfer conceivable.

Granted that Steele's theory is conceivable, is it likely? I do not find it so. The only observations concerning immunology which Steele claims are "paradoxical" from the orthodox view (i.e., the results of Eichmann and Kindt on rabbit idiotypes) appear to me not merely compatible with current non-Lamarckian views, but precisely what one would expect. Further, even if his theory proves true for the immune system, can it provide a general mechanism for the inheritance of acquired adaptations? Almost certainly not, because most acquired adaptations do not arise by a process of random mutation and selection between somatic cells. Learning does not, because it occurs in brains after cell division has ceased. Steele attempts to save his theory by arguing that specific memories in the brain are coded for by specific nucleic acid molecules, but few neurobiologists would agree with him.

I have taken Steele's book seriously, because I think one must listen to attacks on accepted orthodoxies in science. But I do not find it either convincing or even clearly written. My copy arrived containing a press release from the publisher, quoting Arthur Koestler as saying "many geneticists will slap their heads and say 'Why didn't I think of it myself?'" This geneticist's reaction was to ask "Why doesn't Steele credit his idea where it belongs, to Roux and to Weismann?" It is indeed ironic that Weismann should have had Steele's idea before him: it is clearly outlined in the chapter on "Intra-selection or selection among tissues" in his book *The Evolution Theory*. However, Weismann had the insight to see the fundamental difficulty with the idea. This is that those properties of cells which enable them to perform their functions in the body (e.g. muscle contraction or nerve conduction) are quite different from those which would enable them to multiply. As J. F. Crow has pointed out in a review of this book, if Steele is right it is hard to see why we are not more often born with cancer.

Weismann, I believe, is widely underrated. I acquired, from the preface to Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, the picture of an ignorant and cruel pedant whose claim to immortality was that he had cut the tails off mice to demonstrate the falsity of Lamarck's views. A ridiculous experiment! Lamarck would only expect the transmission of traits acquired by active striving, not by passive injury. Steele reflects this contempt, and speaks of Weismann's "absurd experiment". The truth is more interesting. Weismann describes how, when he first put forward his idea of the independence of germ line and soma, he was widely disbelieved on the grounds that, as the whole world knew in those days, the effects of injury are often passed on to offspring—an early application of what J. B. S. Haldane once called "Aunt Jobiska's theorem". Weismann was driven to his "absurd experiment" to disprove this erroneous but widespread belief. His real reason for doubting Lamarckism was that he could not imagine a mechanism which could account for it. He remarks that if one were to come across an example of the inheritance of an acquired character, it would be as if a man were to send a telegram to China and it arrived translated into Chinese.

This remark of Weismann's is the first use known to me of the now ubiquitous analogy between information transfer and heredity. Steele has proposed a mechanism—which as it happens was already known to Weismann—whereby information accumulated during one lifetime could be transmitted to the next. The mechanism is unlikely to be general, but it could conceivably apply to the immune system. If it does, then Steele will have made an important contribution. But to greet his book, as it was greeted in a Sunday newspaper, as the death knell of Darwinism is as silly as it would have been to greet the Wright brothers' flight at Kitty Hawk as the death of Newton's theory of gravitation.

Perils in the pipeline

By Kenneth Mellanby

R. J. BERRY and J. L. JOHNSTON:
The Natural History of Shetland
374 pp. Collins. £8.50.
0 00 219041 9.

The Shetland Islands are the northernmost part of the British Isles, and lie almost midway between Scotland and Norway. Shetland (and the more southerly Orkneys) were part of Norway until 1468, when the Islands were forfeited to Scotland because King Christian of Denmark (who also ruled over Norway and Sweden) failed to pay the dowry of his daughter Margaret when she married James III. For the past hundred years the Islands have been famous among naturalists, and particularly those interested in bird migration; while recently other scientists including R. J. Berry (the senior author of this volume), have made fascinating investigations into the effects of isolation on the local fauna.

The discovery of North Sea oil, and the establishment of a major oil terminal at Sullom Voe, have been and still are a major cause of concern to those who wish to preserve the Shetland environment. Oil pollution could cause increasing numbers of bird deaths, and even wipe out whole populations of endangered species. The developments of industry and the increased population caused by the oil's exploitation, could alter the region's unique ecology.

If we are to have a successful conservation policy for any habitat, we must have accurate information about its flora and fauna. Although there is a substantial literature about the natural history of Shetland, ranging from papers in specialist scientific journals to monographs on particular groups of plants and animals, as well as more general accounts by clergymen and teachers who have lived in the island, this is the first comprehensive record to have appeared. The authors and their many helpers, some of whom have written substantial sections of the book, and British Petroleum, whose activities are endangering the area but who gave a grant towards the book's production, have made a genuine contribution to Shetland's conservation, and one which will be widely appreciated by naturalists throughout the world.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to this excellent book. Professor Berry has edited the text skilfully, so that chapters by other authors on the geology, the vegetation and the birds of Fair Isle fit well with his own contributions. Appendixes listing the occurrence of many groups of organisms have been prepared by the appropriate specialists. Some readers may be surprised to find a chapter on the natural history of man in Shetland, yet they will be enthralled by this account of the islands' dominant mammal. The book should appeal to those making a first visit to the islands, as well as serving as a tool for those involved in their preservation.

But the success of the venture will have to be judged when, in a few years' time, a second edition is produced. Let us hope that it will not have to record a series of disasters, and the subsequent impoverishment of the wildlife so interestingly recorded here by Professor Berry and Mr Johnston.

The Yachtsman's Naturalist, by Maldwin Drummond and Paul Rodhouse (Foreword by Sir Peter Scott; illustrations by John Rignall. 224pp. Angus and Robertson. £8.95. 0 207 95808 4) is an introduction to the ecology of north-west European waters and a guide to the plants and creatures found on the beaches, mudflats and salmarshes of these areas: the coast of continental Europe, the Irish and North Seas, the English Channel and the Baltic. It is written with the ship-board observer in mind and includes chapters on "Seamanship and Long-shoremanship" and "The Naturalist's Yacht and Equipment", as well as on varieties of marine wildlife. There are many figures and colour plates, and a useful glossary.

At the height of magnificence

By Robin Robbins

JOHN G. DEMARAY:
Milton's Theatrical Epic
The Invention and Design of Paradise Lost
161pp. Harvard University Press. £9.90.
0 674 57615 2

MURRAY ROSTON:
Milton and the Baroque
188pp. Macmillan. £12.
0 333 27437 7

Ever since Dryden set about corrupting *Paradise Lost* into his stage version, *The State of Innocence*, perceptive readers have recognized Milton's use of dramatic forms—not only dialogue but what F. T. Prince called "organized and enacted spectacle". John G. Demaray's new book extends the territory he made his own in *Milton and the Masque Tradition* by particularizing and distinguishing these theatrical elements, and revealing their genesis within the poet's own work as well as in the wider tradition of seventeenth-century performances.

After outlining Milton's possible experiences of Italian productions, principally a five-hour musical spectacle at the Casa Barberini, the cloud-machined heaven and the hell with gaping mouth, burning lake, and gigantic winged Satan of various intermezzi and masques—Demaray, nevertheless, concludes that the structure of *Comus* and thence one element of *Paradise Lost* derived immediately from English sources. Though Todd long ago pointed out the similarity of the palace of Pandemonium to that in Davenant's *Britannia Triumphans*, Demaray finds the earlier, general perception by Jonson of "the dawn or twilight of *Paradise Lost*" in Comus more productive.

Such parallels as the arguments concerning the freedom of man's mind to choose between slavery and enlightenment, the temptations of the Lady and Eve, and the descriptions of the antimasquers and the debased devils in Book X, are clearly present, but Demaray seems to push his claims for *Comus* too far in arguing that it suggested the great polarity between heaven and hell, that the chair of state of the Earl of Bridgewater was "a primary source for the depiction of the Almighty". Nor do the rudimentary sketches for "Adam Unparadiz'd" in the Trinity manuscript account for very much of the effect of the finished poem; the suggestion that Milton "turned to" his sketch for "Sodom Burning" for materials for his hell implies a scene hard to conceive; the blind poet so impoverished in imagination as to ask his helpers to read out scraps from an old notebook. This is only less implausible than the accompanying assertion that a juvenile production of forty years before, "in Quintum Novembris", was similarly used; surely forms and ideas survived in the poet's mind, not just in his cupboards.

For the most part Demaray's revelations of theatrical forms, as in the four heavenly triumphs of the Son, the visionary procession of scenes, figures, and actions in Books XI and XII, the final descent from Pisgah, "presentation" by Michael, and exit from the "scene" into the real world at the end, though ingenuous and incontrovertible, remain passive academic facts.

By exposing masque features in Book IV, however—the memorable entrance of the First Parents; their fluid, choreographic movements hand in hand; their dialogue on love and dramatic embrace; the wanderings and frustrated reactions of a disguised Satan; the swift descent from Heaven to Eden of the angel Uriel; and, finally, the First Parents' address to God the Father and retreat to a delightful evening of love"—with verbal echoes (as in "L'Allegro") of Jonson's *Hymenaei*, he brings to light that subtle, ironic, poignant appropriateness to this episode, amply illustrated in Jonson's regretful comment on the irrecoverably lost spirit and splendour of his masque's original performance.

While both of the books under review place some importance on the visit to the Casa Barberini, Murray Roston in *Milton and the Baroque* (a book largely concerned with almost finished ceiling-frescoes by Curtona, the fact that the opera Milton saw was designed by Bernini, and that his many months in Italy were spent during a dynamic period in the development of the High Baroque. Less concerned than Demaray with demonstrating continuities, Roston draws attention to the changes in Milton's style and theme between Comus and *Paradise Lost*. (It is worthy of note that the poems written after the return from Italy to a period of controversy, war and political jostling comprise the Sonnets, mostly on matters of high anxiety—the war itself, the forcing of conscience, the Piedmont massacre, his blindness—and, perhaps, the striffeful *Samson Agonistes*.) He left behind the largely medieval, Spenserian, allegorical world of the masque and of the sketches for "Adam Unparadiz'd", with their personifications, moving at the same time from the concept of a personal, humanist tragedy to an epic view of the Garden of Eden as a cosmic battleground.

To illustrate the relationship between *Paradise Lost* and the continental baroque in terms more specific than the existing recognition of the poem's authoritative assertiveness, grandeur of style and monumentality of proportion, Roston first persuasively describes the origins and nature of the baroque itself. He connects it with Copernicanism chronologically—the style first arose a quarter century after *De Revolutionibus*, High Baroque at a similar interval after the further discoveries by Galileo and Kepler—and ideologically, the closed, neatly ordered world of the Middle Ages becoming a dynamic, unbounded universe, in which man clings to a whirling globe as it hurtles past uncountable galaxies. It was from Kepler and Galileo that Milton patently derived his cosmos in which our whole universe is but "as a Star Of smallest Magnitude". Positive acceptance of the new cosmology produced in architecture and painting "a new sense of vastness, magnificence, and boundless energy", expressed in those ceiling-frescoes which, by contrast with the exaggerated darkness and weight of the windowless masonry below the cornice, burst through its illusory *quadratura* extension into the distant skies, dazzling us with "the concentrated brilliance of the divine light from which all creative power is seen to emanate, and toward which the angelic host is drawn in adoration".

This is the manner in which Milton envisages the angels and God in Book III, and in which the progress of the Son after the War in Heaven transcends the merely horizontal show of a Renaissance triumph to become an apotheosis in the highest heaven. But Roston achieves far more than illumination of local effects. As healthily aware of the inadequacy of mere academic historicism as of over-simplification, he tackles some of the largest questions regarding Milton's art. The seventeenth-century artist's preoccupation with the clashing of enormous forces, for instance, is seen to account for the stature of Satan, who needed strength, resourcefulness, leadership, and personal courage to make him a credible challenger of the Almighty, fit to draw forth "the panoply of heavenly might". Not only Milton's view of the cosmic power of evil but his portrayal of God required a rebel whose enormous ability and energy make the divine victory truly impressive.

A limp acceptance of the assertion that Milton begins according to classical practice in *medias res* is shown to have subjectively distorted our focus on the poem. The central matter is, in fact, man's disobedience, but Milton does not start like his predecessors in the Garden of Eden. Nor has he wandered into the question of Satan's disobedience; rather, Roston argues, he opens the poem in hell in accordance with a scheme of darkness and light that is less a corollary of his blindness than a baroque visualization of his theme.

If it is true that Books I and II were composed after the main body of the poem, it could be that Milton felt the need to place hell and the defeated but persistent challenger here as "a firm visual actuality upon which the reader could mentally be transported by stages to the ultimate vision of a vast, yet physically realized heaven; and that battle that took place there". To have opened with Book III would have launched us into a relatively "vague, amorphous vastness, unplaced in time or space, floating, as it were, in an infinite eternity, with no possibility of taking our bearings or establishing any measure for comparison"—rather like viewing a baroque ceiling-fresco without any floor to stand on or walls to contrast, support and focus.

While some have felt with guilt or jubilance that Milton mistakenly made Satan admirable, others have responded to the war in heaven with ridicule or embarrassed giggles. Roston points out that Raphael gives no hint of deliberate irony or farce in his preamble but underlines the solemnity of the subject and the difficulty of translating celestial conflict into humanly comprehensible terms. "If", Roston rationally argues, "according to Christian belief a war in heaven did occur, there is no other way for the human mind to conceive it, except in terms of devastating gunfire and the clash of arms." He finds in it "immense vigour and turmoil, a baroque clash of forces such as Rubens would have delighted to paint".

God's laughter is not Homeric hilarity but cool contempt, the supposed humour of the scene entirely of the critic's making, perhaps reflected back from Pope's burlesque. Roston brings out how carefully, when Book VI is read in context, we are drawn away from literality into suspension of disbelief and imaginative response, and how Milton manages to maintain both the gravity of Satan's threat and the omnipotence of God through a perspective which reaches back from the battle and up past massive reserves of power and the mighty Son to the Father himself, "still untouched and unrled".

When Milton turns from asserting eternal providence in the cosmic war to justifying the ways of God to men, frail and tiny in the Garden, Roston again finds illuminating parallels for this blooming, fruitful earth in Rubens, who delighted in mellow landscapes and opulent nudes as well as in violent chiaroscuro, battle scenes, and heroes' straining thews, in the rich beauty and vitality of nature and man as well as in the force and brilliance of the heavens. Such terrific comparisons with immediately contemporary art are more actively stimulating than studies which merely accumulate examples of iconographic ancestors in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Though one may take exception to some details of Roston's argument (it is not true, for example, that it was impossible for men of Milton's day to reconcile the psalmist's stable earth with Copernicanism: Gilbert had managed to before Milton was born), he has memorably demonstrated the roots and affinities of Milton's vision in a study which itself partakes of the power and brilliance of its subject. By coincidence, his book and Demaray's are to some extent complementary, but while the latter's revelation of traces of dramatic forms in *Paradise Lost* will have to be noted by any future commentator, Roston's analysis of the poem's vital dynamics may enhance the experience of every reader.

1967-1971

for R.H.

I lived in an L-shaped room. my chair was
almost directly behind the door, so that,
when I was sitting in it, I was virtually
the last thing in the whole room to be seen.
visitors would have to describe a small
circle in order to face me, crouching
on my chair with a book. early one evening
I read most of David Copperfield, *put it*
down for supper, and never finished it.
sometimes, out of nostalgia, I would read
the stories in a children's encyclopaedia,
flicking past the hundreds of pages of
science and travel and other matters
that separated these islands of fiction.
it was the time I was interested in art,
even in abstract painting. my red jumper
and my blue trousers were my favourite
clothes; and least my brown trousers and
lemon-yellow pullover. my last beating
took place then as well, just before lunch.
I had thoughts of resistance, but decided
to let it go; it was somehow understood
that this would be the last time.

Michael Hofmann

Crude, contradictory, vigorous, this copperplate engraving by Christian Richter is taken from the sumptuously illustrated The Thirty Years' War, *by Herbert Langer, translated by C. S. V. Salt (262pp. Blandford Press. £19.95. 0 7137 1098 5). Pouting and broken-nosed in his rocco sandals, he bestrides a heap of martial aids and a caption which, as Langer notes, suggests that the war was "regarded as a stimulating force for science and art by scholars and technicians in particular".*

Proceeding moderately

By J. S. Morrill

T. P. S. WOODS:
Prelude to Civil War, 1642
Mr Justice Malet and the Kentish Petitions
244pp. Salisbury: Michal Russell. £8.95.
0 85965 070 2

T. P. S. Woods's book takes the form of a narrative account of the petitioning campaign at assizes and quarter sessions in Kent between February and August, 1642. It approaches the subject through a study of Sir Thomas Malet, the recently created Justice of King's Bench and assize judge in the Home Counties in both the circuits of that year, and examines the political and judicial responses of both Houses of Parliament and of their committees to developments in Kent.

The book captures the tensions and uncertainties of a country drifting unwillingly into civil war. It avoids premature or rigid categories (such as "royalists", "parliamentarians", or "neutrals") and is at its best in showing how the momentum of events during the winter of 1641 and the spring and summer of 1642 helped to fashion the views and to dictate the actions of hesitant and alarmed men. Throughout, the lodestar of the majority of the Kentish gentry is shown to have been a deep respect for legal forms and observances, a respect constantly upset by the actions and requirements of the Houses and (especially) of their committees. Two other points in Parliament's response to the Kentish petitions are striking: the number of times the House was misinformed in specific but crucial ways about the making of the Kentish petitions; and the impact of Kent's proximity to Westminster in determining the course of events there. As Peter Young put it in a recent lecture: if London had been where Birmingham is, Kent would have been royalist.

Prelude to Civil War makes some significant amendments to the traditional interpretation of Kentish politics between 1640 and 1642 offered by Alan Everitt and Peter Clark. It is most original and valuable in its account of the activities and principles of Sir Thomas Malet, and it throws valuable side-lights on the behaviour of the other judges. It adds to our understanding of the ways in which "moderates" thought and acted in 1642. It is, perhaps, a little harsh on the parliamentarian leadership, who are viewed too much through the writings of Sir Roger Twysden and treated as hard-faced and ruthless; their social evaluation of the situation could have been more fully considered. The main narrative is meticulously researched and written with great clarity and elegance, though there is some imbalance in the introduction, where too much space is devoted to Malet's family tree and to descriptions of the physical setting of the Courts at Westminster Hall and not enough to the political and religious arguments in Kent in 1640-41 (the articles by D. L. Hirst and W. D. Lamont on Sir Edward Dering being ignored).

Nonetheless, Mr Woods's book will assist our re-evaluation of the causes of the Civil War. Old-fashioned Whigs may well lament the failure of revisionist historians to ask "the big *why* questions", but once enough historians have performed the kind of small-scale service for which Mr Woods has performed, the revisionists will be able to assemble big answers to them. In scholarship as in everything else, if we look after the pennies, the pounds will look after themselves.

With an eye on the object

By Oliver Taplin

HOMER:
The Odyssey
Translated by Walter Shewring
349pp. Oxford University Press. Hardback £7.95. (paperback, £1.50).
0 19 281542 3.

"As old Eurykleia passed her hands down over his thigh she felt the scar, knew what it was, and let the foot fall away from her. Down went his leg into the basin, the vessel of bronze clanged and tilted, and the water spilt over the ground. Joy and sorrow seized on her heart at once, tears welled up in her eyes, and her voice changed from clear to faint." Let this passage, picked with a pin from Walter Shewring's new translation of the *Odyssey*, stand at the start as a measure. As his aged nurse bathes Odysseus, come home in disguise after twenty years, she finds the old scar. At this suspended moment there is a long digression on how he came by it (subject of a brilliant and profoundly wrong chapter by Erich Auerbach). The lines I have quoted resume the narrative.

It is always said that each generation needs a new translation of the *Odyssey*. The version by S. H. Butcher and Andrew Lang, first published 101 years ago, satisfied more than two generations. It was one of the first translations of ancient poetry into prose rather than verse. Nineteenth-century scholarship had been revealing the nature of Homeric diction—an outline which a further century has filled in, adding the fact that it was the product of an oral tradition. The language of the epic was quite unlike anything ever spoken at any one time or place. It was an artificial language formed through accretion and selection by generations of bards out of different dialects of different periods with a seasoning of poetic licence and invention. Some phrases were recent acquisitions, and even colloquial, some were centuries old; some words, especially epithets, were long obsolete in ordinary speech and added tone and colour rather than specific meaning. Yet this linguistic hotch-potch was a real language because it was familiar to everyone from the epic poets: because of its central place in the culture it did not seem artificial. What in 1879 was the nearest equivalent? The Authorized Version was prose admittedly; but it was a familiar, noble, weighty language, archaic, yet read and, even more to the point, heard constantly. "The brazen vessel rang, being turned over on the other side and behind, the water was spilled on the ground."

The notion of an English *equivalent* of Homeric poetry has been a quicksand. This was, in effect, Matthew Arnold's warning when he attacked the quaint Spenserisms and balladries of the unfortunate F. W. Newman (doomed to immortality for Arnold's scorn and for his elevated brother). The Miltonic iambics of Cowper were not plain and direct enough either. English has no archaizing poetic diction with the immediacy or universality of Greek epic. So the translation of S. O. Andrew (1948, reissued in Everyman's Library) is not an equivalent in any true sense. "Now the old dame . . . was wont of the scar by the touch and she suddenly dropped his foot on the bath." Arnold might never have spoken. Butcher and Lang triumphantly evaded Arnold's thrust by turning to the *prose* of the 1611 Bible. But with time this has lost its familiarity and special place among the dictions of English, for better or for worse—on the whole, no doubt, for worse.

Once prose was admissible it was only a matter of time before someone turned to a more worldly and gripping, "equivalent" of Homer, the novel of adventure. That step was taken by T. E. Shaw/Lawrence (1932), followed by E. V. Rieu in his best-selling Penguin (1946). The main point for them was that the *Odyssey* is a surge-and-thunderingly good yarn. So it is; but so are the lives and loves of Hornblower or Poldark. "She abruptly let go her master's foot, which made the metal ring as it dropped against the basin, upsetting it and spilling all the water on the floor. Delight and anguish swept through her heart together". Rieu jogs in the khaki shorts of Rider Haggard and John Buchan.

But the *Odyssey* is rather more than a ripping yarn. It can still convince us that endurance and fidelity can win through, that bullying and barbarism need not prevail, that physical suffering can bring insight. It persuades us that we should never despair for a vagabond may prove to be Odysseus home at last. It is perennially powerful because it is so well constructed, line by line and book by book; because it is so vivid and particular in presenting objects, scenes and emotions; because it flows unstintingly with poetry. For a thousand years Homer was known simply as The Poet. If Homer is not poetry, nothing is.

Since Rieu there have been two "poetic" translations, a loose blank verse by Robert Fitzgerald (1961) and a loose six-stress line by Richmond Lattimore (1965). Both may be verse rather than poetry, both have stretches which might be prose but for the typography; but neither is quaint or precious, both have pace and power. Every student knows how close Lattimore is verbatim to the original; too close perhaps, though I can vouch that his work reads effectively in performance.

The basin tipped over on one side, and the water spilled out on the floor. Pain and joy seized her at once, and both eyes filled with tears, and the springing voice was held within her.

Fitzgerald is more free and vigorous:

and into the basin fell the lower leg, making the bronze clang, slosh'ing the water out. Then joy and anguish seized her heart; her eyes filled up with tears; her throat closed and she whispered. . . .

It is easy to pick little holes in any translation ("springing" is too odd, "sloshing" too sloshy), but by and large these two are successful. Their generation has been fortunate to have two worthy translations.

I have always accepted the doctrine of the temporary sway of any translation and been sceptical of the notion of a plain "timeless" language. Walter Shewring's achievement in his *Odyssey* has made me think again. It is in prose, which alone I should have supposed to be a fatal disqualification. It is not the prose of picaresque, romance, adventure tale or any other genre, it is Shewring's own prose—measured, plain and craftsmanlike. It is not the style of the past, nor is it straining to be the style of the future, it belongs to this one work. In the course of his interesting and wide-ranging "Epilogue on Translating" Shewring writes, "It is made in prose because such verse as I can command is quite inappropriate for a heroic narrative. Prose, then, with words of the present century, but not the language of careless day-to-day talk and writing; a certain formality seems needful if the reader is to have some inkling of Homer's much greater formality."

Shewring could easily have written a verse translation. The throb of blank verse is often heard on the wind. "Joy and sorrow seized on her heart at once . . ." In fact I suspect that the avoidance of blank verse has often been a consideration in his choice of words. Again, a little fiddling with the typography could have made this translation look like free verse, better free verse than much that masquerades as poetry. Honesty and modesty have set the page as prose.

During his long life Walter Shewring has been the friend and admirer of Eric Gill and David Jones; and he shows the same qualities of care, craft and integrity as they did. Like them he always composes, as Arnold says of Homer, "with his eye on the object", or, as this version puts it of Odysseus's carpentry, "he trued the surface". Yet David Jones was a poet: whatever its typography *In Parenthesis* is not prose. Few who have actually read it can have failed to recognize it, with T. S. Eliot, as "a work of genius". It is also one of the few works of modern times which one might compare with Homer. It is Homeric in its scale, scope, particularity and universality, and in its poetry. Of course Shewring could not have directly modelled his *Odyssey* on David Jones, for Jones's language and style were peculiar to himself—indeed he would have held that each individual might find a unique language if he could dig deep enough in his own loam. But Jones's cadences and assonances, his caesurns and sound-patterns, might yet, one can hope, inspire a translation of the *Iliad*.

"He felled twenty trees, all told, and trimmed them with the axe, smoothed them deftly and trued them to the line. Then the goddess brought him augers, and he bored all his pieces through and made them meet exactly, then pinned the craft together with pegs and joints." This is Walter Shewring's version of Odysseus making his own boat on Calypso's island. It may serve to give an impression of his own deft craftsmanship.

Fate and the hero

By S. R. West

JASPER GRIFFIN:
Homer on Life and Death
218pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £12.50.
0 19 814016 9

Homer
82pp. Oxford University Press Paperback, 95p. (Hardback, £4.50).
0 19 287532 9

W. A. CAMPS:
An Introduction to Homer
109pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £5.95 (paperback, £2.50).
0 19 872099 8

Preoccupation with the techniques of oral poetry has for nearly half a century diverted attention from the literary qualities of the Homeric poems. There is now general agreement that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* represent the culmination of a long tradition of oral epic, but the price of this consensus has been a failure of confidence in the validity of conventional literary criticism applied to these poems. Though we may welcome the oralists' assurance that the countless inconsistencies detected by nineteenth-century analysts do not matter, we are left wondering what does. If style, content and narrative technique are largely traditional, is it sensible to discuss the author's intentions? The apparent difficulty of applying conventional aesthetic methods has led scholars to concentrate on questions which are, strictly speaking, peripheral to the poems themselves. Yet at a time when a novel about rabbits represents, at any rate for English readers, the most powerful contemporary expression of the qualities characteristic of heroic epic, the need for informed and perceptive criticism of these archetypal epics is surely greater than it has ever been.

In *Homer on Life and Death* Jasper Griffin rises splendidly to the challenge. This lucid, erudite and extremely readable book explores the ways in which the Homeric poems give profundity and universal significance to what, in the troubled times reflected in them, must have been sadly commonplace events. Central to this theme is the Homeric view of what it means to be a hero, in life and in death. Though there is much of interest about the *Odyssey* (and indeed about a wide range of other literature), the Homer of the title is primarily the poet of the *Iliad*.

There might seem, at first sight, a certain heroic simplicity about Griffin's approach, since he does not regard the circumstances of composition as very relevant to those aspects of Homeric epic which concern him. That he is convinced of the *Iliad*'s essential unity would be an obvious inference even if he did not say so explicitly, but he offers no further clues as to his view of the early history of the text. This austere refusal to be side-tracked from literary criticism into literary history highlights what Griffin regards as important, and his method is clearly justified by its results, which ought, by and large, to be perfectly acceptable to those who hold more complicated or untidy views about authorship and origins.

An accumulation of sensitive and patient observation illuminates the poet's skill in using evocative and expressive details to enhance the significance of characters and events while maintaining an apparently objective and unemotional style. Life in the Homeric world is highly stylized; everyday objects take on symbolic overtones, and what might easily be dismissed as conventional details of typical scenes—arming, preparations for a feast, and so on—are an important part of the distinctive atmosphere of Homeric epic. Viewed in this light what seems to many readers the least attractive aspect of the *Iliad*, its apparently endless battle scenes, acquire a new significance: "Fate, not fighting technique, is what interests the *Iliad*; the hero, splendid and vital, going down into the darkness."

Comparison with heroic narratives from other cultures and with other literature from the ancient Near East shows how distinctive is the *Iliad*'s vision of heroism. But the most profound of all the means by which the poet expresses the pathos and significance of heroic action is the divine background; the contrast, kinship, and interaction between gods and heroes are of fundamental importance in Homer's presentation of the heroic world. Griffin argues convincingly against a reductionist view of the Homeric gods: frivolous though they may be among themselves, in their dealings with men they are unambiguously formidable. To dismiss their role in the epic as "divine apparatus", a literary device to avoid monotony or by-pass problems of inadequate motivation, is to disregard something essential.

The only part of the book where I have slight reservations is the discussion of characterization. A distinction surely needs to be drawn, in principle, between characters with a legendary-historical fullness of their own and those who have only the dimensions given them by the author, the distinction between Napoleon and Pierre in *War and Peace*; Agamemnon clearly belongs in the first category, Phoenix, Achilles' tutor, in the second. If, as some have thought, Paris was originally Troy's chief warrior and Hector was imported into the story rather late in its development, most probably by the poet of the *Iliad*, their different origins are relevant to the *Iliad*'s presentation of these two sons of Priam. The way in which they appear to the modern reader, for whom both alike are legendary figures, cannot be quite what the poet envisaged.

Moreover, it seems necessary to make some concessions here to the different requirements of an audience and a reader (a more useful distinction than that between oral and written literature). The author who composes for occasional performance before an audience is likely to attach more importance to impressive episodes, even at the cost of some inconsistency, than to overall structure. But this order of priorities is likely to produce characters who, to a reflective reader, may appear irrational, inscrutable or unreliable. This is more apparent in the *Odyssey* (and it is not surprising that Griffin finds many of the *Odyssey*'s characters enigmatic and "remarkable for their opaqueness"), but even in the *Iliad* there are many places where slightly surprising or inconsequential behaviour is more naturally explained by external, compositional factors than by psychological ones. These caveats complicate discussion rather discouragingly, but seem essential if the danger of misplaced subtlety is to be avoided.

This is a book of depth and insight. Its approach is individual, though not eccentric, solidly based on an enviable mastery of Homeric scholarship and, even more important, a rational conviction of the grandeur and profundity of the *Iliad*.

In *Homer*, the latest addition to the Past Masters series, Griffin has given us a brilliant and memorable introduction to the two epics. This is something more than a trailer for *Homer on Life and Death*, though anyone who contemplates reading both should read the shorter book first. Griffin constantly keeps in view readers whose main interests lie in other areas of literature, but to those who know the poems well his exposition offers the fascination of surveying a familiar landscape from a new and particularly advantageous standpoint. Though enough is said about such things as the style and historical background to orientate the newcomer, the book is mainly concerned with the thought underlying the poems. This approach naturally tends to emphasize the differences between them; and we may feel a certain regret that two great poems were not treated on a scale appropriate to two distinct "Past Masters". Yet perhaps, after all, such a book may be considered successful only if it leaves the reader with a sense of hunger not yet satisfied: the main thing is that people should be induced to read the epics themselves, and this masterly characterization can hardly fail to achieve that purpose.

W. A. Camps's *Introduction to Homer*, like his invaluable *Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (1969), reduces a large, complex subject to pocket-sized proportions without falsification or over-simplification. The first part of the book is an acute and perceptive essay on Homeric poetry and the reasons for its effectiveness, the second consists of notes and supplementary matter. Clear, lively and sensible, it can be recommended without qualification to anyone who reads or intends to read Homer, whether in Greek or in translation, and despite its modest appearance it contains plenty to interest specialists.

Introduced by Jarquetta Hawkes, with photographs by Tim Mercer, *The Illustrated Odyssey* sets to pictures E. V. Rieu's translation of Homer first published by Penguin in 1946 (255pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £8.95. 0 283 98588 7). In addition to many good and appropriate photographs of Greek artifacts and buildings, there are photographs of real places to match descriptions in the text, "informed guesses", taken presumably at the places which Odysseus was estimated of have reached. It is true that at a crucial early point on the map of Odysseus' journey the following note appears: "from here to Ithaca this route, and, indeed, these suggested by many others who have attempted to trace Odysseus' voyage, are thought by many to be fanciful". But the result remains a curious and pleasing oscillation between fiction and reality.

commentary

The playboy of the Gudbrandsdal

By Inga-Stina Ewbank

Peer Gynt
Oxford Playhouse

Peer Gynt is a rich and inconsistent play: Ibsen himself, in a letter to Edmund Gosse, spoke of it as "wild and formless" and "recklessly written". All those adjectives could be used to describe the recent Oxford Playhouse production, which remarkably caught the spirit of the play despite—or perhaps because of—an apparently irreverent treatment of the original text.

There's the rub, for *Peer Gynt* is also Ibsen's most Norwegian play. Its plot and characters are supplied by folktale and legend; its themes *are rooted in the mythology of troll* and *hulder* and *nokk*; its naturalism depends on precise topographical detail and its sociology on an understanding of the beginning breakdown of the rural community in mid nineteenth-century Norway. Ibsen had unusual (for him) doubts about its translatability, not least because the language of the play is steeped in dialect and proverbial sayings, and abounds in open and submerged quotations. Any translation must be both verbal and "cultural" and must, even more than translations generally, be a compromise.

The text for the Oxford Playhouse production shows an intelligent awareness of these problems. It declares itself (within the "code" of the recent Riverside Studios conference on play translations) as "Adrian Mitchell's adaptation from Karin Bamborough's translation", and is clearly the result of a collaboration between a translator versed in the original language and lore, and an adaptor with a serious intention of finding a living theatrical idiom for the play. But this collaboration also *extended to Nick Bicât, who com*posed the music for a large number of interspersed songs with words by Adrian Mitchell, and also to the visual translation performed by the choreography of Terry Gilbert and the design by Nadine Baylis, to the sharp control and pace-setting by the director, Gordon McDougall—*and indeed to the cast, who whizzed in and out of parts with irresistible* creative aplomb.

The idiom thus found was something like an intellectual pantomime. The largely undergraduate audience, on the night I saw the play in a sadly only half-filled house, reacted with particular delight to Peer's disquisition on how he brings a method into his studying by skipping. But larger ambitions are involved At the heart of Ibsen's play is an attack on the Norwegian ethos as Ibsen saw it, from his Italian exile, in the mid-1860s: on the national romanticism embodied in the fabulations of Peer, and on the spirit of compromise best articulated in the Boyg's advice to "go round about". English audiences, who have an innate suspicion of the uncompromising Brand (whom Ibsen had just written out of his system), have tended to love Peer Gynt as the playboy of the Gudbrandsdal. There was this element in this production, *too—and a particularly* wholesome "Norwegian" Solveig in Laura Davenport—but there was also an effectively discordant strain which, without any of the pompousness which such terminology may suggest, reached through to probe a modern ethos.

This has a great deal to do with the music: as in John Barton's *The Greeks*, Nick Bicât's pseudo-rock has a both exciting and haunting effect, now glorying in, now lamenting its *own banality. The "adapted" text* and the songs go hand in hand with this, occasionally by indulging in imported topical allusions—the Thatcher Troll delivers a conference speech on self-respect and self-congratulation and the Button-Moulder "re-cycles" selves—but mainly by translating the play's mythology into a kind of phantasmagoric *pop* world. The Hall of the Mountain King becomes a super disco where Super Troll presides as an ageing rock star over an orgy of sound and colour which freezes into cold, white silence for Peer's dehumanizing eye-operation. Music and dance interpret the words, notably in what is no doubt the sexiest bit in all Ibsen: the scene of the three *saeter girls*. This version can afford to stay quite literal—"Rough is gentle. . . . And gentle is rough"—as against Michael Meyer's over-explicitness ("Gently means rape. . . . And rape means gently").

One would have to be a very hardened purist not to respond to the unabashed cheek with which this version takes care of the cruxes in the play. The most famous is the Troll King's definition of the difference between human and troll morality, where the original's opposition between man's *vaer deg selv and the troll's vaer dig selv-nok* has produced such verbally faithful translations as the Oxford Ibsen's "To thine own self be true . . . To thine own self be all-sufficient", and Michael Meyer's "Man, be thyself . . . Troll, be thyself—*and thyself alone*". Adrian Mitchell's Super Troll has: "Men say: 'To thine own self be true.' Trolls say: 'Me first! And right up you!'" and the Troll chorus then picks up the "Me first", to make the whole *business of self* less solemn and far more frightening.

Again, the staging supported the immediacy of the text. The raked stage and the marvellous effects achieved with simple swathes of cloth (notably in the shipwreck) obliterated the distinction between naturalistic and symbolic scenes; and Peer's onion made our eyes smart back in row H of the stalls. The production moved at a fierce pace, getting through a compressed version of the entire structure in just over three hours—where the first Norwegian production (1876) ran for nearly five hours and even then omitted the whole of Act 4. Scenes and passages are obviously jettisoned, and omissions may have jarred on some Ibsenites; but anyone who resented the freedoms taken here with the structure ought to consult Ibsen's letter to Grieg of January 23, 1874, suggesting cuts which make us the Mitchell version fundamentalist by comparison.

I am not suggesting that Adrian Mitchell has found the ideal solution to the problem of an actable English text of *Peer Gynt*. Ibsen wrote the play mainly in a simple, free *knittelvers*—a four stress line with rhymes in varying patterns—and with a simple vocabulary and *sentence structure which create a* translucent texture probably inimitable in English. Mitchell does best with satirically pointed couplets and clearly feels most comfortable when he invents freely, as in his songs, or in such interpolations as Peer's confused mythology of "Jesus and the seven dwarfs", the Pigasus (*sic*) which carts off Peer and the Woman in Green. He is in fetters when he has to write "straight" speeches for Peer, and the moments of real despair in the last act suffer accordingly.

Some of this strain showed, I think, in the performance of Peer himself, Ian McDiarmid. It began ominously, with Peer looking and behaving like a cross between Struwelpeter and Ken Dodd, though his accent was of the Cockbain variety than Knotty Ash. The opening dialogue with Aase (Margaret Gibbs) was an almost unintelligible gabble, and hints of the tickling stick vulgarized the first meeting with Solveig, making it impossible to take seriously that strange position for purity which is part of Peer's contradictory make-up. But as the ensemble playing gained in strength, and as the music helped to build up moods, he began increasingly to control our responses—now outraging, now moving in the end, he had achieved a curious Everyman quality, both very old and very modern, which is of the essence of the play.

Back in the 1960s, two officials of the Royal Shakespeare Company—Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*, which did much to show how the theatre can speak to us about being alive. Adrian Mitchell had a hand in both, "adapting" one and writing the lyrics for the other. Something of the same irreverence and the same theatrical shock tactics characterize this adaptation of *Peer Gynt*. It explores rather than exploits Ibsen, and leaves us both entertained and disturbed. Would that it could have run longer, to come to London.

Ver most jreadful fings

By Julie Kavanagh

Sugar and Spice
Royal Court Theatre

At the end of Nigel Williams's first novel, *My Life Closed Twice*, the hero envisages a list of punitive devices that might wean him of his compulsion to write: things like reading only the front half of weekly journals; investigating the possibility of joining The Women's Movement; or cultivating a pseudo-Leftist/party-bore pose with remarks like "I'm only *really* interested in the working class". In *Sugar and Spice*, Williams seems to have taken at least two of his fictive prescriptions to heart.

The play soon exposes its author as a crusading feminist, tendentiously manipulating characters and events: Everyone is there, it seems, only to exemplify the ideological theme—like Suze, the middle-aged "model" who brings a group of punk teenagers back to her council flat (we're never sufficiently told why), apparently an emblem of Degraded Woman herself. A synthesis between Glenda Slag and the Wife of Bath, she condemns herself in every breath with remarks like "A man may do very most jreadful cruel fings . . . But a woman *needs* 'im see?" Sharon, tough as a terrier, more boy than girl (outstandingly played by Toyah Willcox), is there as a megaphonic mouth-piece for equal rights: because, being female, she fails to get a job as a mechanic, in the course of the play she takes her revenge on Mon by shaking a fistful of broken glass at the exposed genitals of an unfortunate boy called Steve who has been lured into the flat by the maenadic quintet.

Platitudes of The Women's Movement become pegs for prolonged set-pieces. The men-see-women-as-objects theme is behind Sharon's rant against pin-up magazines, the key to the semi-enforced strip by Carol (once a victim of male use and abuse, now "soft in ye'ead" as a result), and is the reason for *the salacious, iconoclastic* invective given to John, who can see women only not physically, as cuts of meat or motor cars.

Ostensibly there to rescue his friend Steve, John takes over the megaphone from Sharon in Act 2. It is his turn now to threaten someone's naked genitals (Carol's) with a broken bottle. This kind of contrived, systematic method of construction virtually rules out any dramatic tension or credibility. The violence seems gratuitously manipulated to substantiate the sexism theme and, as a result, is hardly intimidating. Similarly, in tearing a passion to tatters Williams destroys any dramatic resonance or sense of climax. It is this monotony, rather than, as most critics seem to have felt, his somewhat patronizing encroachment on working-class territory, that makes *Sugar and Spice* difficult to accept.

Across the table

By Harold Hobson

A Galway Girl
Lyric Theatre Studio, Hammersmith

You can fire two shots from the same gun, and hit targets as widely separated as ecstasy and resignation: or so it appears from Geraldine Aron's *A Galway Girl* (Lyric Studio until November 1) and Harold Pinter's *Landscape*, *recently revived at the National*, for one performance only, in honour of the author's fiftieth birthday. Visually, both plays are exactly the same. In each a man and a woman sit on either side of a kitchen table, speaking a monologue antiphonally with each other but making no communication across the gulf between them. In *A Galway Girl*, by an Irish-South African dramatist little known in England, Maisie (Veronica Duffy) and Dermot (Patrick Waldron) describe the same trivial incidents from their own point of view: the husband's irritating fondness for fried fish, his neglect of all their children but one, a visit to London, and so on, just as Pinter's Duff and Beth talk of a pothouse and a vision by the sea. But there is this difference: Pinter's play makes us acquainted with rapture, Miss Aron's with the slow progress of an enduring, unromantic, unexpected sorrow.

With great skill, Miss Aron makes us aware of the passage of time; her characters were young, now they are middle-aged, now old, and one of them dies. The play ends with a muted expression of affection of the wife for the husband; something brilliantly simple, three knocks on a table—no more than that—conveys the tired, patient love that sometimes endures through years of household bickering. When *this small but very remarkable* play is over, one has seen, in the space of half an hour, two whole, mediocre, worthy, respectable lives, and one wonders, with a certain poignant melancholy, whether this is all that life is. A man, a woman live for sixty, seventy, even eighty years, and make many friends, and when they die these friends never speak of them again. And if by chance their name is mentioned, there falls an awkward silence, and another subject is hastily introduced, and oblivion is restored.

Christina Rossetti, in an exquisite poem, said that this was a good thing, and Thackeray that when the paint on *the puppets is worn off* and their joints are cracked, it is better that they should be put away in their box and forgotten in some dusty corner of the house. "*Vanitas!* Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world, or has his desire? Or, having it, is satisfied?" It is only rebelliously that *A Galway Girl* accepts these brutal truths, finding that it is from the saddest thoughts the sweetest songs arise. Miss Duffy and Mr Waldron speak Geraldine Aron's simple, innocent, often humorous, always touching lines with the compassion that she has for her characters and for all working people, all those that make no name for themselves. Nicholas Broadhurst directs the play with a welcome lack of *self-advertisement*.

A hundred best tunes

By Patrick O'Connor

An American Trilogy
New York City Opera

While the prolonged orchestra strike keeps the Metropolitan Opera in darkness, a banner across the front of the State Theater at the other side of the Lincoln Center declares "NYC Opera—where opera comes alive". On October 9 the company presented the first performances of three new one-act operas by young composers under the title *An American Trilogy*.

Stanley Silverman's *Madame Adare* is a spoof on psychiatrists, opera divas and the sensation seeking press and public. The libretto by Richard Foreman is deliberately naive and, although there are a couple of moments when a joke is over-extended, genuinely amusing. The Devil tempts Miss Adare with success and glory as an opera star, while her agent tries to persuade her to seek money and notoriety in the movies. She chooses Art, and the figure of Bloodlief appears accompanied by a troupe of operatics who, for a moment, take up the "Slava slava" chorus from *Boris*. This enjoyably frothy pastiche could have a success elsewhere, but not without a very well-paced production such as is provided here by Richard Foreman himself, who has made of it a sort of *opera danse*, with a chorus of nurses and brown-suited spivs. Richard Cross is excellent as the crazed analyst who is shot dead by the heroine, vigorous and sung and danced by Cass Gaskarth. Her best scene comes at the finale when, having achieved both her goals, she sings a Gershwin style song, "I'm a lucky woman". But the conductor, Brian Salesky, has the most rewarding assignment of the evening; the orchestration is a sophisticated mélange of musical puns and quotations from Bach, Strauss and Mussorgsky, and he is witty life of its own.

Thomas Pasatieri's *Before Breakfast*, based on an early Eugene O'Neill melodrama written in 1916, also has as its central figure a neurotic woman. The score, conducted by Imre Pallo, makes much use of dance rhythms of the 1920s but is rather upstaged by the inclusion of a Duke Ellington record and a honky-tonk piano which plays a nostalgic waltz. The other problem here is what might be termed the *Trovatore* syndrome—most of the action has already taken place before the curtain rises. The only event during the course of the opera, the faithless husband's suicide after half an hour's nagging from his wife as she prepares breakfast, is off-stage. The setting is updated to around 1930, which provides a ready-made reason for the couple's squalid circumstances, but the problem of how to communicate a fairly complex story and situation is not altogether solved by evocative decor, though Marilyn Zschau scores a great personal success as The Woman.

The third opera, *The Student from Salamanca*, adapted by Ian Bach from a Cervantes interlude, is conducted by Judith Somogi who, like the other two conductors, is making her début. Unlike the works preceding it, which have resolutely American settings, this is an opera buffa with cunning serving wenches, a husband cuckolded by an amorous monk and even a comic barber—is the world of Cimarosa or Paisiello and needs a flow of sparkling arias if it is to have any meaning. To satirize eighteenth-century opera plots without paying attention to any of the musical conventions of the genre reduces such a work to a hawdy romp. The music is relentlessly busy, constantly promising melodies which never arrive.

"Lo, Hudled up, together Lye/Gray Age, Grene youth, White Infancy./If Death doth Nature's Laws dispence,/ And reconciles All Difference/Tis Fit, One Flesh, One House Should have/One Tombe, One Epitaph, One Grave./And they that Liv'd and Loved Either,/Should Dye and Lye and Sleep together./Good Reader, whether go or stay/Thou must not thence be Long Away." The epitaph of William Bartholomew, who died in 1662, and his wife and children, in Burford parish church: from *Epitaphs from Oxfordshire*, collected and introduced by Patricia Utechin; with illustrations by Clare Roberts (79pp, published by Robert Dugdale, Wolfson College, Oxford. £2.95. 0 9503880 6 8).

commentary

Stories of imperialism: Romans and Celts . . .

By Oswyn Murray

The Romans in Britain
Olivier Theatre

If there is one thing that is certain about a modern play called *The Romans in Britain*, it is that it will be about imperialism: in all other respects Howard Brenton keeps us guessing. Since a large part of his power as a dramatist lies in his creation of dramatic tension through surprise, it is hardly fair to reveal all the twists in this complex and fascinating play. But the central paradox is already contained in the briefest synopsis of the plot. This is not a play about Roman Britain itself, for neither of the two parts are set in Roman Britain. The first part concerns the period before the Roman conquest, the brief and unimportant second raid by Julius Caesar in 54 BC; while the second part oscillates between a date a century after the departure of the Romans (515 AD) and the present day. The play therefore turns out to be about imperialism in a rather special sense.

For an older generation, much of the fascination of the theme of Roman Britain lay in the ambivalence of imperialism. There was the superficial ambivalence as one imperial people recalled the time when it was itself subject to another; but there was also a deeper question. Like the imperial British, the Romans recognized the price that must be paid for empire, by both master and subject. Aeneas already bears the white man's burden, he must give up personal happiness for imperial duty. On the other side Tacitus, son-in-law of Britain's most famous governor, could put some of his finest speeches into the mouths of barbarian chiefs defending their liberty against Rome: "they make a desert and they call it peace". Yet like all imperial powers from Sargon's Akkad to Brezhnev's Russia, the Romans believed in their destiny and in the *benefits of the civilization* that they offered.

Ultimately, the morality of imperialism must be measured by the extent to which the subjugated the conqueror come to be accepted by the conquered, and the 350 years of the *pax Romana* in Britain must be seen as the longest period of stable prosperity that history is likely ever to give us. But peace is boring and irrelevant to the modern world. By setting the scene before and after the *pax Romana*, Howard Brenton avoids the deeper questions about imperialism, to concentrate on the terror of living without it and of being involved in its creation. His play is most of all an African parable, moving directly from Shaka Zulu to General Smith, and asking what difference was made by the transient civilization between.

The African parallels are too disturbing to be made explicit: instead, through Celtic kinship the Irish are invoked. The Irish theme is laboured from the start, with two Irish outlaws hounded through the forests of southern England by the native Britons; then the invading Romans transform themselves into the British army in Northern Ireland, and finally it is in a cornfield simultaneously near Camulodunum and on the Irish border that the last remnants of Roman Britain flee the Saxons, as a drunken British intelligence officer stakes out the murder of an IRA man.

But though this is a political play, it is not a play with a political message, unless it be that violence is basic to all human societies because it is the natural state of man. It is mere convention that the IRA do not torture their victim, but appear as cool, efficient, civilized assassins, while the British army are hysterical thugs: it does not mean that Howard Brenton has any sympathy with the underdog. For the first hour the play is devoted to showing how nasty and brutish the *Brits* were (and the *Paddys*) in their primal innocence, as three naked Tarzans of astonishing beauty string an Irish beggar upside down to cut his throat and drain it into the tribal drinking bowl, long before they are murdered or buggered on stage by the Roman army; while the matriarch of the tribe is a careful study of the meanest aspects of peasant society uncorrupted by civilization. As soon as the Romans are gone, the underlings return to their habits under Saxon pressure: a steward and two cooks murder their plague-ridden mistress, while two sisters batter their father to death with a stone, in what is clearly intended to be the real version of *King Lear*. The two groups then sit down to plan the whole Arthurian cycle. This is high black comedy, but it rests on no sympathy with the oppressed.

Two characters in the play momentarily engage our sympathies: Caesar represents ironical, civilized imperialism: "That everyday life will begin again. That violence will be reduced to an acceptable level. That civilization may not sink, its great battle lost". But even Caesar's mind moves upon violence like a tarantula in the dark. With Major Chichester, the drunken British spy, one senses a deeper message, another level of comment on the action, which does not quite come off, perhaps because Howard Brenton has omitted to torture him, and left his muddled motives without religious justification. But religion is generally fumbled: Druids, Christians and pagan revivalists are cardboard figures; and Chichester too becomes a frivolous character, unable to persuade us that his view of the situation is real.

The play is written in chronicle form, with short scenes often overlapping, a large cast creating a complex picture of public events, no characterization, and Elizabethan comics for light relief. Each episode is highly dramatic, and the prevalence of blood and violence completes the illusion of a return to Elizabethan conventions. But the very looseness of the chronicle form can be an excuse for self-indulgence, and works strongly against the obvious intention to create resonances between the events in different periods. The most puzzling feature of the play is the change in tempo and mood between the two halves. The first half carefully creates a world of casual violence and institutionalized brutality which is artistically convincing, if a travesty of the actual social organization of southern Britain before the Romans. The second half seems deliberately to trivialize the problems of living in a post-Roman world; much of it is played for laughs, and even where the scene is serious, the fact that this violence is merely a re-enactment of previous scenes diminishes its significance. Parallels are clearly intended between the two halves: many are made explicitly in words, and others are underlined through the use of the same actor for different parts; yet there is no overall pattern, no sense that the re-enactment of these past events is itself the meaning of human suffering.

If the play is neither strictly political parable nor chronicle, it is certainly myth, created—appropriately for a modern myth—by a process of demythologizing: "In I Very fashionable, the Celts, with the arty-crafty. Ley-lines. Druids. But show them the real thing—an Irishman with a gun, or under a blanket in an H-block and they run a mile. If King Arthur walked out of those trees, now—know what he'd look like to us? One more fucking mick." But Brenton rejects myth only to embrace realism, not reality: his vision is the modern mythic vision of a world without pity or depth. We are meant to see ourselves in all periods, but in fact see ourselves in only one aspect; and the new myth is created by the use of an artificial modern idiom.

Both myth and idiom suffer from simplicity of stylistic levels. Howard Brenton can swear loud and long; but like the violence and the nudity, the swearing seems merely a device to shock the councillors of London. There is no sense of the variety of rhythms introduced by swearing in different social contexts, which made the art of swearing so beautiful and complex a transformation of the English language, at least when I was serving in Northern Ireland. And there is no evidence at all for Howard *Brenton's belief that the more primi*tive you are the cruder your language is: anthropology suggests quite the opposite.

It is an exciting enterprise, which leads to an obvious comparison with the work of David Jones, and especially his great biblical Romano-British Arthurian epic of the First World War, *In Parenthesis*—often performed as a radio play and surely deserving the National treatment. It is this comparison that explains best why Howard Brenton's play is a failure, though a brave and interesting one and a work of great dramatic power. It fails as a statement, about society or war or history or myth, because we do not believe in its language. David Jones of course was a Welshman; and though Howard Brenton does not mention the Welsh, they are the true Romano-British Celts: it is their legends and their perceptions which are at stake. David Jones had also of course been a soldier, and in his war knew that he had experienced all wars: he knew that the myths were the real meaning of history; and so he could lift the present or the mythic plane and relate it to history, not least in his use of language:

I was with Abel when his brother
found him,
under the green tree.
I built a shit-house for
Artaxerxes . . .
I am the Loricated Legions.
Helen Camlodunum is ours:
she's the toast of the Rig'ment,
she is in an especial way our
Mediatrix.

Each statement is true: we know that shit-house for Artaxerxes; but we do not believe it when Howard Brenton's Roman soldier says, "I am always digging *lavatories* on this campaign which are never used". That is just a playhouse joke.

. . . English and Irish

By Seamus Heaney

Translations
Dublin Theatre Festival

Brian Friel's *Translations*, which has just finished its very successful run at the Dublin Theatre Festival, plays elaborate variations on an old theme. Perhaps Joyce stated it most succinctly in the classic passage towards the end of *A Portrait of the Artist* where his English Jesuit confuses Stephen Dedalus by calling a tundish a funnel, and Stephen goes on to meditate on the consequences of the language shift in Ireland from Irish to English: "The language we are speaking is his before it is mine . . . my soul frets in the shadow of his language". For a moment Joyce allows Stephen to indulge the myth of dispossession, though he is careful to allow him another, steelier moment when Stephen tells Davin that his people threw off their own language willingly.

The play is set in Irish-speaking Donegal in the 1830s, at a time when the dispossession or abandonment began to accelerate. A corps of the Royal Engineers is at work on the Ordnance Survey of *Ireland*, anglicizing and standardizing the place-names—"making sense of them". Captain Lancey and Lieutenant Yolland are being assisted in their work by Owen, son of the local hedge-schoolmaster, Hugh O'Donnell, while being resented by his other son, Manus. Yolland falls for Manus's fiancée (or perhaps one should translate this to his "intended"), tribal lines got tangled and things fall apart.

Traditional characters (redcoat soldier, shawled girl, hedge-schoolmaster—this last a drily realized portrait by Ray McAnally) and traditional motifs (eviction, potato-blight, poteen) are woven together with a mixture of irony and elegy. Friel knows that there were certain inadequacies within the original culture that unfitted it to survive the *impact of the English presence* and domination, but the play is not simply a historical entertainment. What the schoolmaster says to Lieutenant Yolland in Act 2 is symptomatic of Friel's vigilant concern with the way we still use language in Ireland (and in England?): "It can happen that a civilization can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour that no longer matches the landscape of fact."

To the 1830s the landscape of fact included the new National Schools where the instruction was free and in English, but Friel's scene is a hedge-school—a kind of fit-up classical academy—where the first language is Irish, although Latin and Greek are to be heard almost as frequently. We do not hear Irish on the stage, of course—and that is of course tells us how successful the National School system was—yet once the English soldiers arrive we understand that it is the language of the Donegal characters, because Owen, the son who has arrived back from Dublin with them, begins to act as go-between and interpreter. This allows Friel to show, at times comically and at times angrily, that there are still two kinds of speech within what appears to be a common language shared by the two Islanders. It also allows him to show Owen assisting in the annihilation of the place he came from as he translates the place-names into English and literally changes the map.

Owen (played with brio and a *proper bewilderment by Stephen* Rea) is a key figure in the dispossession / abandonment uncertainty. His brother Manus sees him as a betrayer, his father, more cautiously, sees him as a kind of success, and he cannot quite manage to see himself. Significantly, he cannot settle for a name; he is Owen to the natives but his soldier friends call him Roland and he does not quite deny them their mistake. There is a lovely moment at the end when the place-names he has anglicized are read out by Captain Lancey in their new versions and Owen must translate them back into Irish for the benefit of his neighbours. It is a list of places that the army is now intent on devastating in retaliation for the presumed killing of Lieutenant Yolland. The betrayer is betrayed.

Brian Friel has by now produced a more significant body of work than any other playwright in Ireland, and it is time that he was, as it were, translated. I am sure this piece would come home like a remembrance in, for example, Derek Walcott's theatre in Trinidad. His recent plays—*Aristocrats* and *Faith Healer* last year, and now *Translations*—show him in the grip of a major theme. He has come in from different angles but with a constant personal urgency upon the need we have to create enabling myths of ourselves and the danger we run if we too credulously trust to the sufficiency of these myths. In the opening *moment of Translations*, a girl who has been mute is being taught by Manus to say: "My name is Sarah". Nothing can stop her now, Manus assures her, she can say who she is so she is safe. Towards the end of the play, however, when the English captain demands who she is, his command and strangeness scare her: "My name . . . my name is . . ." is all she can manage. It is as if some symbolic figure of Ireland from an eighteenth-century vision poem, the one who once confidently called herself Cathleen Ni Houlihan, has been struck dumb by the shock of modernity. Friel's work, not just here but in his fourteen preceding plays, constitutes a *powerful therapy, a set of imagina*tive exercises that give her the chance to know and say herself properly to herself again.

commentary

African writers at Frankfurt

By Lewis Nkosi

Many journalists and exhibitors who witnessed the temporary occupation of the South African Publishers' stand by protesting African authors at this year's Frankfurt Book Fair would have been astonished had they been present at an earlier meeting of the same authors, lasting till nearly three in the morning, where this action was first conceived and then vehemently debated.

What began as a calm, though radical, analysis by the Paris-based Cameroonian novelist, Mongo Beti, of what he termed an alliance between South Africa and some Francophone West African states, rapidly developed into a shouting match of remarkable ferocity between two Senegalese writers, one of whom is the internationally famous prize-winning novelist and film-maker, Sembene Ousmane, a one-time dock-worker and trade unionist in the port of Marseilles. This confrontation, unwisely conducted between two adjacently seated opponents, ended in an exchange of blows in which, had it been allowed to continue, blood would surely have been spilt.

The fight served to remind us of at least one of the important facts about modern African literature written in the European languages. This literature was born in adversity, the result of an encounter, often marked by systematic brutality, between Europe and Africa. As the first memoirs of African slaves and countless African autobiographies ever since show, slavery and colonialism are the foster-parents of this literature; and it is a literature which, however sophisticated, still bears the scars of its origins, and retains its combative role. In its constant search for new foes to demolish, African literature is, I suppose, close in spirit to its East European or Latin American counterparts. Certainly, innovation and experiment are present in Western literature, but they are no longer linked to any consuming passion for social innovation.

African writers, on the contrary, are split into two violent camps: those, often supporters of the present ruling élites, who merely wish to repeat the gestures of the past; and those who think they can detect in those élites a new enemy. This has infused the best of the current writing from Africa with a burst of new vitality, while bringing into the debate about literature and politics a depth of feeling alarming in its acrimony. Not since the turbulent 1960s, for example, has London, New York or Paris seen such violent feuds and ruptures as those which currently divide African writers of left and right. The belligerent exchange between the Senegalese writers at Frankfurt was symbolic of larger antagonisms. In a way, by handing African authors a ready-made issue, the presence of South African publishers at this year's Book Fair managed to snuff out the smouldering animosities between the right and the left.

The German organizers had spent a great deal of money to bring to Frankfurt some thirty African authors from Africa, Europe and America for a symposium that was not distinguished by any fresh approach to African literature or any depth of intellectual insights. Old issues concerning the use of European languages in African literature were rehearsed. The West German government, on its part, perhaps profiting from its past experiences in negotiating the rights of movement between the two Germanies, had employed its considerable skill in persuading the South African government to allow two Black poets, James Matthews and Sipho Sepamla, to attend.

In the event, the former astonished his auditors by immediately biting the hand that had snatched him, though admittedly only for a few days, out of the South African cauldron by declaring that he was not grateful for this assistance, since the West German authorities were cooperating with Pretoria in the economic oppression of his people. At one stage Matthews, who had been detained several times by the South African Government, broke down and wept.

During the poetry readings which took place later, the quality of the works presented by Matthews and Sepamla raised in a painful way the old question about the necessary connection between political commitment and artistic excellence. The pressures on black South African writers, in particular, to give as merely a harrowing accumulation of brute facts about their oppression, in the manner of Mtutuzeli Matshoba's *Call Me Not a Man*, are so great that the unintended result can be a numbed self-distancing, from the sheer need for self-protection. The worst moments in the works of Matthews and Sepamla created a disconcerting impression of poets who find it easier to reach out for a slogan than on arresting image. Works like these, Theodor Adorno once argued, "merely assimilate themselves sedulously to the brute existence against which they protest".

Getting out

By Christopher Hope

Banned
BBC TV

"Banned" (the last chapter in the BBC series *Escape*) was the dramatized story of the South African editor Donald Woods's dangerous flight, disguised as a priest (there is a tradition of clerical garb among South African fugitives), in the aftermath of the death in detention of Steve Biko. The formidable editor of a provincial paper, the *East London Daily Dispatch*, Woods was, as is well known, increasingly unwilling to pull his punches in a country where opposition newspapers endure the painful contradiction of attacking editorially the system which is responsible for maintaining the white affluence celebrated on their other pages.

"Banned" began with an arrest, and finished, after several close shaves, with a steadying cup of tea and our man safely over the wall in Lesotho. Mark Kingston made a convincing Woods, even if he could not quite get his tongue around the South African accent. He showed his anger and outrage modulating into a painful understanding of the mental restrictions of a banning order, and finally to a grudging admission of its effectiveness in these forms of statutory repression, pettiness is all. It is a method many people have had to endure with considerably less publicity, but the effects of such an order on a man used to the boisterous exchanges of political life among the whites are especially hard to take, and Ivor Dunkerton's sympathetic direction bought out Woods's mounting frustration.

Janet Suzman's finely judged air of restrained desperation conveyed, too, the pressures under which Wendy Woods found herself: facing the family, meeting the press, obliged to speak for her husband, now reduced to a shadowy, fretting figure whom his friends were only allowed to visit one by one, as if stepping into a dickroom. When Woods's young daughter was burned by a T-shirt impregnated with acid, it was time to go.

Woods's story is inextricably linked with Steve Biko's lamentable end in a police cell, a connexion emphasized by Shane Connaughton's script. The implication that Woods is a kind of official repository of the Biko flame, is not resisted. But in truth the story of Biko cannot yet be told; it is too close, and was not an exceptional event in South African prison history. Rather it is part of a continuing drama still being lived through by unnamed and unsung black South Africans, for whom there is no escape.

Society nudes

By Sara Selwood

R. B. Kitaj: Pastels and Drawings
Marlborough Fine Art, 6 Albemarle Street, W.1.

It is unusual to come across a painter who insists on arguing the case for representational painting from an ideological point of view. But that is what R. B. Kitaj does. Since 1976, when he selected the Arts Council's exhibition, *The Human Clay*, he has made his position clear. He condemns the sort of art that is about "exalted colour, for instance, or boxes, or holes in the ground"; it has no significance for the world outside itself. And, just in case we might have forgotten, Kitaj reminds us that such art can only be appreciated by people versed in the appropriate "half-baked philosophical double-talk". It is, he insinuates, unnatural. What art should do is go back to what Kitaj calls "the most basic art-idea": the representation of the human figure. After all, it was the human figure that was the basis of so much "great art".

But Kitaj's demands for the rehumanization of art are not just inspired by his allegiance to a supposedly dying tradition. He is convinced that art is duty-bound to comment on human nature and, by extension, human society: "Some day when I'm chased limping down a road looking back at a burning city, I want the slight satisfaction of knowing that I couldn't make an art which didn't confess human frailty, fear, mediocrity and the banality of evil." Kitaj also champions an art for the people. He asserts that if you can draw the human form well enough, the whole world can instinctively respond to it. Thus, he concludes, "art becomes more *social*".

Over the past two years Kitaj has drawn nothing but the human figure. It is these drawings that are currently on show at Marlborough Fine Art. Many of them are pastels stylistically indebted to Degas, whom Kitaj credits with having injected "the last fire and brimstone into representation". About half the works in the exhibition are nudes, the mainstay of the figurative tradition. But far from being academic exercises, Kitaj's nudes seem to cater for popular tastes in erotica. His work does have wide appeal; the exhibition is completely sold out. But the gap between the pictures that people might instinctively respond to and those that comment on the frailties of society looms very large.

All the same, on those occasions when Kitaj delves deep into his conscience and unearths intensely personal images of humanity he succeeds in touching our suppressed instincts. Very uncomfortable it is, too. "The Listener (Joe Singer in Hiding)" is one such image. Joe Singer, the archetypal Jew, is a fiction of Kitaj's. He hangs around the artist's neck like a millstone. Kitaj represents him crouched like a predatory animal in the darkness underground, intent on life in the sun-drenched village above. Singer holds out his hand to keep us at bay. It is clearly the best place for us to be.

Since Kitaj is so skilled at representing the evil inherent within a single individual, it is tempting to wonder how he might treat society as a whole. Several of his works at Marlborough's are concerned with political themes: "The Rise of Fascism", "The Communist and the Socialist", "China and Russia". But none of them has the immediacy of his studies of Joe Singer.

In the 1970s he was accused of being obscure. Like Eliot in the notes for *The Waste Land*, Kitaj saw fit to produce a literary explanation of his major composition, "The Autumn of Central Paris (After Walter Benjamin)". Here, however, no notes for "The Rise of Fascism" (recently purchased by the Tate) pinned to the wall at Marlborough Fine Art. This is unfortunate, because we could do with them. The work is obviously an allegory. But quite why it should depict three prostitutes, a rat and a Second World War bomber is unclear. Maybe the allusions are literary. Perhaps we should dip out our copies of Benjamin, Kafka and Eliot all over again. As one critic commented a few years ago, Kitaj paints pictures for the Pleth crowd. Paradoxically, as this exhibition shows, Kitaj's new "social" paintings are those that most heroically fail to fulfill his demands for a "social" art.

Mid-Atlantic art

By Tom Phillips

British Art Now. An American Perspective.
Royal Academy.

One glimpse of Henry Moore's export record, coupled with the fact that he has probably not been on strike for more than a minute or two in sixty working years, might have persuaded a less myopic government to support the promotion of British art abroad. One way of doing this would be to pour money into the British Council, whose Fine Art department has given the country's arts a solid international reputation. It has often presented overseas a more coherent picture of British painting and sculpture than that offered by home-based institutions; one sometimes feels also that, because national prestige is at stake, its critical eye has been sharper than that of the Arts Council.

Perhaps the reason why, through savage budget cuts, the opposite has happened is that the British Council, concentrating on its proper task, has not been as effective at building its own image at home as the nation's abroad. Only rarely does it show its face in Britain itself. It is doing so currently at the Royal Academy, and unfortunately there is egg on it. This exhibition is a doubly sorry event in that, breaking a long-standing Council taboo against mounting exhibitions in the United States, it served as a misleading introduction to British art at the Guggenheim Museum; although the time was ripe, the venue right, and the possibilities were great, the artists shown were not selected by the Council itself.

The Guggenheim Museum delegated one of its curators, Diane Waldman, to demonstrate "an American perspective" on artistic activity in the United Kingdom. With what one hopes is mere naivetê she has selected a handful of British painters and "art operatives" of by and large modest ability, who are almost all matched and bettered by their American models or counterparts. New York is not the place to show our run-of-the-mill abstract painters or minimalist sculptors or to allow Tim Head, usually a sensitive builder of environments, to show less than his best work. The sticks-stones-and-bracing-walks-with-a-Pentax department is represented at a level of no more than pleasant, undemanding amateurism by David Nash, and, except for some anamorphic blurred faces in the photographs of Simon Read (whose specially constructed cameras were used to a future in the woodpile. If the show is meant to illustrate extended idioms it lacks the weight that, say, Mark Boyle's work would have given it. Spread about the Academy rooms, the exhibition looks sketchy and one cringes at the thought of what it looked like clinging to the sides of that great art centrifuge in New York.

Ms Wadman's introduction and notes are none too literate, and someone will have to break it to her that "Sweet Thames run softly", etc, does not "come from a Tennyson poem".

Guido Morris

Guido Morris, who at intervals over many years ran the Latin Press, and who died recently, made his career the expression of his conviction that the craft of printing could and should approach the condition of an art-form; that layout and type-faces, besides adding to our appreciation of a literary work, could have an intrinsic aesthetic appeal and value. In him that craft has lost one of its outstanding practitioners, and the world of small private presses one of its most brilliant and enigmatic figures.

Morris began in 1935 with four broadside magazines for the Bristol Zoo, where he was then employed. But his passion for Latin, for English Literature and for printing as a demanding and creative activity was the driving force behind his life as a printer, which was marked by exceptional talent and dedication, and an equal lack of ability in handling the commercial side of the enterprise. A friend remembered Morris "with his intense interest in printing, thinking, baking bread, talking and living, all on little or no money". Consequently Morris's Latin Press was periodically beset by financial difficulties which ended in bankruptcy or voluntary liquidation.

Operating first from Langford, East Somerset, and later from London, Morris, relying mainly on the patronage and generosity of friends and fellow pressmen, managed repeatedly to revive the Press and to produce his highly distinctive work in the form of catalogues, programmes, posters, broadside letters, pamphlets of verse and prose, and the magazine *Logaoedi Mirabilis*—often at the cost of considerable self-sacrifice. A friend of the 1930s describes Morris living in the basement where he had installed his latest press, "sleeping alongside his beloved Albion. He had few possessions, and I seem to remember him as always being in a dark brown corduroy suit, with long hair, coming up for air when the mood took him".

After the war Morris moved to St Ives; it was there that he printed the "Crescendo Poetry" series, which included verse by John Heath-Stubbs and Michael Hamburger (the printer undertook to pay costs and royalties). When the Latin Press was finally abandoned, Morris worked in a bookshop in London, and as a reader for the Cambridge University Press; then, astonishingly, he joined London Transport as an underground guard. At this point he seems literally to have gone underground, a move which prompted many to lament the waste of one of the kingdom's finest printers", who, it was said, must have been "one of its worst guards".

A more complete account of Morris's life and work by Anthony Baker can be found in *The Private Library*, the journal of the Private Libraries Association, in its winter 1969 number (still available from Ravelston, South View Road, Pinner, Middlesex), from which the above quotations are taken. The same issue includes a "tentative checklist" of the items printed by the Latin Press during the years 1935-53.

Alan Jenkins

The 1980 Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize, "to further the aims to which Isaac Deutscher, a prominent Marxist teacher and scholar, was dedicated," has been awarded to Rob Rowthorn, Lecturer in Economics at the University of Cambridge, for his book, *Capitalism, Conflict and Inflation*, published by Lawrence and Wishart.

The prize for 1981 will be awarded in the autumn and a jury, drawn from the sponsors, will consider work published or in typescript. Any work of outstanding research and writing in the tradition of Isaac Deutscher should be submitted by May 1, 1981, to The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize, c/o Lloyds Bank, 68 Warwick Square, London, SW1.

to the editor

'Reflections on the Nile'

Sir,—I am writing to thank you for giving my new collection of poems, *Reflections on the Nile* (July 25), so much space. Few people have understood the poem "Cricket" and described it with such intelligence as has Alan Jenkins. Of the six reviews I have received so far, however, five—including Mr Jenkins's—have referred to or spent some time on my relations with Leavis. Curious. Because he is dead, perhaps. I have been plagued by this myth all my writing life. After all, it is fifty years ago that it happened, or, more correctly, didn't happen. I therefore wish to make a deposition about my early relations with Leavis. My later relations with him were sad, and, indeed, terrible.

During the four years I was at Cambridge, 1925-29, I met Leavis once, at a breakfast party given by Mansfield Duval Forbes, when we spoke for about three minutes. I did not even attend his lectures, which began, I think, in 1928.

In September 1929 I went to Helsingfors, now Helsinki, as Lector in English at the university. In December 1929, I began to write poetry seriously. When I had managed half a dozen poems or so, I wrote and asked a friend if he knew anyone who might be interested in having a look at them. He replied: "Send them to Leavis." I did and Leavis and his wife got quite excited about them. Queenie said: "Matthew Arnold as a modern." I sent them some more poems and Leavis suggested that I should read Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley". I met Leavis at his home in June 1930 and we talked in general terms about contemporary poetry, with little reference to mine.

Later in that year I met T. S. Eliot, and we became intimate friends. I stayed with him at Harvard in 1932 and saw him frequently until his second marriage. I never had what could be called a friendship with Leavis and saw him rarely. He had no influence whatever on my poetry. He helped me to find a publisher for *The Loosening* (1931) and I contributed several poems to *Scrutiny* at his request. I also published in *Scrutiny*, in 1933, an essay on "XXX Cantos of Ezra Pound". That is all. It should be noted that *New Bearings in English Poetry* was published one year after *The Loosening*. I was in America at the time.

I should perhaps mention that Noël Annan (now Lord Annan) thought the poem "Festivals of Fire" was too much influenced by *The Waste Land*. I asked Eliot if he agreed. He replied: "Your poem owes nothing to any work of mine. If it owes anything to anybody it is to Pound in his *Cantos*, but I am not at all sure about that." Faber and Faber, of course, published the book *Festivals of Fire* in 1934. My poetry may not be very good, but I am quite certain that I have written the poems myself and not under the influence or instruction of anyone else.

I feel that I ought, in my old age, to record these things. You will, I am sure, understand that I have written this letter to establish the truth and without any intention of annoying or criticizing your reviewer.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

Via Nicola Martelli 1A, Int 5, 00197 Rome.

Rochester's Letters

Sir,—May I correct an impression conveyed by J. P. Kenyon's review of my edition of Rochester's letters (October 17)?

Professor Kenyon refers to John Harold Wilson's 1941 edition of part of Rochester's correspondence, the letters to and from Henry Savile, as "impeccable", and says I should have explained in what ways my book is an improvement on this and other publications in which letters of the poet have been printed.

In my note on "The Text" (page 38) I make it clear that for eleven important letters Professor Wilson did not use the original holograph manuscripts at Longleat House but relied on the printed versions in the appropriate report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. These versions, I point out, are inaccurate and bowdlerized. My footnotes to the letters in question draw attention to the main omissions. In one letter, for example, we hear of the death in 1678 of Colonel John Fitzgerald, Governor of Tangier. Wilson, following the HMC report, makes an unacknowledged cut where the original reads "he owed his ende to his modesty which would not suffer him to discover a clapp till a gangreen made it publick to the world and mortal to himselfe". Another letter reports that Francis Roper, a Groom of the Bedchamber, "has most happily consummated" with his new wife, a Maid of Honour to the Queen; but Wilson stops where the manuscript continues "how many times the first night is as yet knowne to none but the Queens Majesty".

There are many similar silent omissions in Professor Wilson's text, and it was indeed lucky, as Professor Kenyon infers, which discouraged me from belabouring Wilson with them. Working in the United States in the build-up to the Second World War, he would obviously have found it harder to visit Longleat than I did more recently from Oxford. All the same, Wilson ought to have acknowledged his reliance on secondary sources.

As for the other part-editions, John Hayward's of 1926 and Johannes Prinz's of 1927: even taken together, they are very far from complete; their texts are undependable, as I often have to point out in my footnotes; Hayward's annotation is thin and unreliable, Prinz's non-existent; and, like Wilson's collection, they have long been out of print.

These are among the reasons why what my publisher, Basil Blackwell, describes as "the first complete, unexpurgated edition of Rochester's letters" was needed.

JEREMY TREGLOWN.

Halton House, Charlton-on-Otmoor, Oxfordshire.

Writers' Ink

Sir,—Alistair Elliot is quite correct (Letters, October 3) in drawing attention to the enduring qualities of carbon-based ink which was commonly used in antiquity. He is not correct, however, in stating that the Gallus Papyrus comes from the Sudan. It was found in 1978 in the excavations of the Egypt Exploration Society at Qasr Ibrim which is in Egyptian Nubia, about fifty miles downstream from the Sudanese border.

His case, however, is made not nearly as strong as it might have been. There are in the British Museum Egyptian papyri dating from the Fifth Dynasty, with their texts quite as clear as those on the Gallus Papyrus. They were written about 2400 BC, antedating the Gallus Papyrus by many more years than the span of time which has transpired since that papyrus was written and thrown into its rubbish tip at Qasr Ibrim.

T. G. H. JAMES.

14 Turner Close, London NW11 6TU.

German Drama

Sir,—Martin Esslin's lament that "very little German drama is performed in the English-speaking world" (October 3) needs some qualification.

Apart from the National Theatre's "Austrian list", enterprising Fringe theatres have in recent years introduced British audiences to important new writers from the German-speaking world like Handke, Bauer, Fassbinder, Kroetz, Mueller and Schütz. Nor has BBC Radio Drama neglected this field. Earlier this year Martin Jenkins's production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* more than fulfilled Mr Esslin's hope for a "really good" production of Brecht. Also during the past year, BBC Radio 3 has broadcast plays by Mueller, Enzensberger and Walser and we have commissioned translations of von Kleist's *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* and a play by the East German writer, Fritz Rudolf Fries.

In endorsing Mr Esslin's view that among contemporary figures Fassbinder and Bauer are "significant", he could also add the name of Botho Strauss, who has been performed widely in Europe, and in the United States, but never in Britain.

ANTHONY VIVIS.

Radio Drama, British Broadcasting Corporation, Broadcasting House, London W1A 1AA.

Takis Sinopoulos

Sir,—It may be worth adding two small notes to Roderick Beaton's intelligent and understanding review of the poems of Takis Sinopoulos (October 10). His experience of war as an army doctor was of a bloody and gruesome civil war; this seems to me to have great importance in his poetry. The poem *Nekradeipnos* or "Death feast" is not just "a return to the old obsessive mode". It is a rewriting of an early poem, and its roots are in the civil war.

While I am at it, may I also comment on Sir David Hunt's kindly review of my own *Hill of Kronos* (September 26), on a misprint he notices? The plays performed at Pyrgos by local boys during the Nazi occupation really were Jonson's *Volpone*, Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and a play they wrote themselves. An elder and leading member of this group was Takis Sinopoulos.

PETER LEVI.

Austins Farm, Stonesfield, Oxford.

Webster's Wife

Sir,—Following up my "In Search of John Webster" (*TLS*, December 24, 1976) and subsequent letter (March 11, 1977), I can now confirm that the playwright's wife was indeed Sara Peniall, daughter of Simon, a freeman of the Saddlers' Company. She was baptized on April 20, 1589, at St Bride's Fleet Street (Guildhall Library, MS 6536): so she was only just seventeen years old when her first baby, John, was baptized at St Dunstan-in-the-West from her father's house—he had obviously moved along Fleet Street to the more fashionable parish since her own birth—on May 8, 1606. In the register of St Mary's Islington (at GLC Record Office, County Hall), I have now found an entry that John Webster and Sara "Gimmell" or "Glumell" (the writing is bad) were married by licence on March 18, 1605/6. I suspect that the "Glumell" one can read "Peniall", and that Webster had secured a licence to marry at a village outside London, where he and his bride were presumably not known, shortly before the birth of their baby. The fact that the marriage was most unusually in Lent indicates the urgency.

MARY EDMOND.

17 Denman Drive, London NW11 6RD.

With this issue the price of the TLS goes up from 35p to 40p. We much regret this increase, which has been made inevitable by rising costs of production.

Among this week's contributors

JOHN ASHBERY's recent collections of poems include *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, 1975, and *Houseboat Days*, 1978.

NICOLAS BARKER is Head of Conservation at the British Library.

JULIAN BECKER is the author of *Hitler's Children: the story of the Baader-Meinhof Gang*, 1977.

LUCY BECKETT is the author of *Wallace Stevens*, 1974.

BERNARD BERGONZI's books include *Reading the Thirties: Texts and Contexts*, 1978.

ROBERT BOYERS is the editor of the quarterly, *Salmagundi*, and author of books on Lionel Trilling and F. R. Leavis.

ANTONY BRETT-JAMES's books include *Wellington At War, 1793-1815*, 1961, and *Daily Life in Wellington's Army*, 1972.

ALISTAIR ELLIOT's parallel-text translations of Verlaine and Heine were published in 1979. His parallel-text edition of Virgil and Dryden's *Georgics* will be published next spring.

INGI-STINA EWBANK is Professor of English at Bedford College, London. Her co-translation of Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* was performed by the Helsinki Theatre Company in 1976.

PATRICK GARDINER is the editor of *The Philosophy of History*, 1974.

HENRY LOUIS GATES JR is Assistant Professor of English and Afro-American Studies at Yale University.

BRIAN HARRISON's books include *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872*, 1971.

SEAMUS HEANEY's collection of essays, *Preoccupations*, will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

CHRISTOPHER HOPE's novel *A Separate Development* was published in South Africa last July and almost immediately banned.

JOHN KERGAN's books include *The Face of Battle*, 1976.

STEPHEN KOSS's books include *Nonconformity and British Politics*, 1975, and *Asquith*, 1978.

ANNETTE LAVERS's *Structuralism and Post-Structuralism* will be published next year.

HUGH LLOYD-JONES is Regius Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford.

DON LOCKE's most recent book is *A Fantasy of Reason: the Life and Thought of William Godwin*, 1980.

PHILIP MASON's books include *Kipling: The Glass, the Shadow and the Fire*, 1975.

JOHN MAYNARD SMITH is Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex.

KENNETH MCLLANBY is the editor of the periodical, *Environmental Pollution*. His *Farming and Wildlife* will be published next year.

BRIAN MONTGOMERY is the author of *A Field Marshal in the Family*, 1973.

J. MORDAUNT CROOK's books include *The Greek Revival: Neo-Classical Attitudes in British Architecture 1760-1870*, 1972.

J. S. MORRILL is the author of *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War 1630-1650*, 1976.

JAN MORRIS's books include *Farewell the Trumpet: an Imperial Retreat*, 1978, and *Destinations*, 1980.

OSWYN MURRAY is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. He is the author of *Early Greece*, 1980.

LEWIS NKOSI is a lecturer in Modern African Literature at the University of Zambia.

TOM PAULIN's most recent collection of poems, *The Strange Museum*, was published earlier this year.

TOM PHILLIPS's most recent book, *A Human Document*, will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

MARCIA POINTON's *William Dyce* was published earlier this year.

DERRICK PUFFETT is a Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford.

MICHAEL D. REEVE is a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

H. C. ROBBINS LANDON's most recent book is *Haydn: the Early Years 1732-1765*, 1980.

ROBIN ROBBINS is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Sheffield.

PAT ROGERS's books include *Henry Fielding: a Biography*, 1979. His most recent book, *Robinson Crusoe*, will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

C. H. ROLPH is the author of *The Police and the Public*, 1962, and *The Queen's Pardon*, 1968.

JOSEPH RYKWERT's books include *The Idea of a Town*, 1976.

SARA SELWOOD is a lecturer in Art History at the Open University.

FRANCES SPALDING's biography of Roger Fry was published earlier this year.

VIRDA SKULTANS is a lecturer in Mental Health at the University of Bristol.

JULIAN SYMONS's books include *Notes From Another Country*, 1972.

KEITH WALKER is a lecturer in English at University College London.

S. R. WEST is the author of *The Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer*, 1968. Her commentary on *The Odyssey*, books 1-4, will be published shortly.

Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers on that they reach this office not later than Friday, November 14. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of November 21.

Competition No 42

1 . . . . a hand, or eye
By *Hilliard* drawn, is worthy an history
By a worse painter made. . . .

2 When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios and stuff,
He shifted his trumper and only took snuff.

3 Rue, au 23, Ballu
Jeprime
Sitôt Juin à Monsieur Degas
La satisfaction qu'il rêne
Avec la fleur des syringas.

Result of Competition No 38

Winner: Joan Mackie, 22 Lathbury Road, Oxford OX2 7AU.

Answers:

1 We have bathed, where none have seen us,
In the lake and in the fountain,
Underneath the charmed sutue
Of the timid, bending Venus,
When the water-nymphs were counting
In the waves the stars of night,
And those maidens started
Not you.
Your limbs shone through so soft and bright.
—Thomas Lovell Beddoes,
"Epithalamia" *Death's Jest*

2 Feathered masks,
Pots of peas,
Janus asks
Naught of these.
Creaking water
Brightly striped,
Now I've caught her—
Shrieking biped.
Flute sonatas jump
And turn together,
Changing clumps
Of glassy feather.
In among the
Pots of peas
Naiad changes—
Quick as these.
—Edith Sitwell, "Gardener Janus Catches a Naiad"

3 . . . the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.
—John Keats, *Hyperion*

So much Greek, so much cold

By J. Mordaunt Crook

R. W. LISCOMBE:
William Wilkins 1778-1839
297pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
0 521 22528 0

Architectural fashions—as Spooner said of undergraduates—are rather like decimals: they recur. Neo-Classicism, it seems, is back in vogue—or rather Neo-Classical theory is one of the medicines currently prescribed for the terminal sickness of the *Modern Movement*. Even the dullest Regency architect can find a publisher. There is only one snag: the Neo-Classicism which interests modern architects—a post-functional system based on semiotic principles of design—is a very different thing to the Neo-Classicism which obsessed the Greek Revivalists of the early nineteenth century. Theirs was a precise visual language couched in antique terms and tied strictly by precedent. Architects of genius—Sir John Soane, C. R. Cockerell, "Greek" Thomson; even a clever charlatan like Nash—mastered this language, bent its rules, and managed to transform archaeology into architecture. The second-eleven men—Sir Robert Smirke, William Wilkins, Decimus Burton—could exploit this restrictive fashion only as far as their limited abilities allowed. Wilkins suffered most of all in this respect. Smirke at least had a talent for abstraction; Burton an eye for urbanity. Wilkins was essentially an archaeologist turned architect, a scholar with a theatrical background, a Cambridge don with good connections and a weakness for polemic. And when his brand of archaeology was eclipsed by the Renaissance revival—when Regency gave way to Victorian—his reputation collapsed. R. W. Liscombe does his best. But the fame of William Wilkins resists—and is likely to resist—all attempts at resuscitation.

Wilkins was the son of an East Anglian architect who built up a prosperous practice on the basis of partnership with Humphry Repton. After graduating Sixth Wrangler in Mathematics at Gonville and Caius, young Wilkins toured Greece, Asia Minor and Italy between 1801 and 1804. On his return to Cambridge he took the architectural world by storm. Championed by Thomas Hope of Deepdene, his Grecian design for Downing College defeated a Roman version submitted by no less a competitor than George III's Surveyor General, James Wyatt. Downing's Ionic columns—"a string of sausages," S. Cockerell later called them—established the Greek Revival as the dominant architectural fashion, and launched Wilkins on a spectacular professional career. His success at Downing—repeated simultaneously in his defeat of Henry Holland at Haileybury—meant not only the triumph of Greek over Roman orders but also the victory of campus over quadrangle. For Downing was the first college in the world with a campus-style layout of contiguous blocks, ten years earlier than Jefferson's University of Virginia. And even before Downing had been built Wilkins had executed the most dogmatically Grecian country house in England—Grange Park, Hampshire (1804-09)—a dramatic evocation of the Theseion in a romantic Reptonian landscape.

Even so, Wilkins's talents were academic rather than strictly architectural. Dr Liscombe rightly singles out the Downing campus and the Gothic screen at King's College, Cambridge (1823-28), as his greatest coups. But how much of Downing did young Wilkins owe to Thomas Hope? And surely the idea of the screen at King's stems at least partly from Hawksmoor's All Souls' Dolmeny (1814-18). Tregothnan (1815-17) and Dunmore (1820-22) are competent variations on a theme from East Barsham Manor. But most of Wilkins's Gothic works—Corpus Christi, Cambridge (1822-27), or Trinity New Court (1821-25), for instance—are mechanical examples of an undistinguished style: Picturesque Gothic without the justification of a Picturesque setting. Perhaps his most successful work was University College, London (1826-30).
And out of the wilderness a noble structure grew.
The architect Bill Wilkins and the artist Flaxman too,
Made the college what it is to me and you.

But when he tried the same formula of portico, stepped stylobate and dome at the National Gallery (1833-38), the result was disastrous—except when viewed obliquely from Pall Mall East. As for St George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner (1828-29), its admirers have never been numerous: the coming battle for its preservation will be based less on recognition of its beauty than on fear of what will probably replace it. Even Grange Park, striking enough by any standard, belongs only equivocally to Wilkins: its conception had been largely anticipated in a design by Robert Mitchell published in 1801.

Only as a classical archaeologist was Wilkins really in the front rank. And even here one must enter a caveat: his talents were descriptive and analytical; he was almost the last of a generation not yet primarily concerned with excavation. Still, his reputation as a scholar was established with *Antiquities of Magna Graecia* (1807), a lavish folio illustrated with fine drawings—plans, sections, elevations and Picturesque views—showing the temples of Syracuse, Selinus, Agrigentum, Egesta and Paestum. His *Atheniensia* (1816) contained several essays, lucidly argued, on the topography and antiquities of Athens. His *Civil Architecture of Vitruvius* (1812, 1817) combined a careful commentary on the Roman master—he was the first to interpret *scamilli impares* in terms of optical deviations—with a challenging essay on "The Rise and Progress of Grecian Architecture" written by no less an authority than the future Prime Minister, "Athenian" Aberdeen. Finally, his *Prolusiones Architectonicae* (1837), contained a number of valuable observations on the Erechtheion, illustrated by meticulously measured elevations and sections. Wilkins fully merited his place among the Society of Dilettanti, and his election as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy.

As an architect, Wilkins's talent was for detail rather than composition. In that respect he was the reverse of his arch rival Sir Robert Smirke. In other respects too: Smirke was a Tory architect, Wilkins seems to have been a Whig; Wilkins had a fatal fondness for controversy, Smirke was known for his "talent of silence". In the 1840s, their reputations slumped together, but Wilkins's even more dramatically than Smirke's. By 1847 W. H. Leeds felt free to deliver a crushing verdict: the architect of University College had been so obsessed by precedent that he was incapable of creating the unprecedented. "Far better", he suggested, that the architect of St. George's Hospital had "never been to Athens or Magna Graecia". "Infinitely better" too, for the architect of the National Gallery, "if instead of labouring to convince us that the Temple of Solomon was a building of the Grecian Doric order, he had applied himself to more diligent and real artistic study of his own drawing board". In the same year another critic, James Elmes, delivered the *coup de grâce*:

[His buildings were] all of one family, one school, one style—pedantry . . . . So much Greek, so much *gout* . . . . so much Greek, so much *cold*, was the practice of William Wilkins—for no liberty would he give or take, no line or member would he use for which he could not find a precedent in some ancient Greek building—and the older and more formal it was the better. He was a Greek puritan and an archaic methodist . . . . Should the Emperor of Russia in imitation of the Empress Catherine, erect another Hermitage at Petersburg, no man could have executed the freezing task so well as the cold and chaste architect of Downing College.... Yet . . . . [he was] perhaps the best educated classic that has honoured the profession of architecture since Sir Christopher Wren. Had the talents of Mr Wilkins been directed solely to literature, Grecian archaeology, the higher branches of mathematics, or to an accurate delineation of those antiquities which he so profoundly admired, he would have obtained a higher standing among the great men of his country, than he does among his architects; lacking, as he does, the architect's greatest qualities—invention and freedom from pedantry. His was the very mummy of the art—as cold, lifeless, and as much bound up by the bands of precedent.

That judgment still takes some answering.

There is undeniably a mechanical sameness about much Greek Revival work. In the 1830s English architecture—as Wilberforce remarked of the Church of England—merely had of dignity, and of monotony too. When Wilkins was asked at Cambridge how he managed to design so much, he replied: "It was possible to do a great deal by method." The Greek Revival was indeed a style only too easy to codify, and only too hard to adapt. Unlike the Gothic Revival, it lacked indigenous roots. Unlike the Palladianism of the eighteenth century, it lacked the accumulated riches of a continuously evolving system. Unlike the Oriental and Egyptian Revivals, it lacked even the alibi of escapism. William Wilkins began as its champion, and ended as its victim.

The speculative city

By Joseph Rykwert

FRANÇOISE CHOAY:
La Règle et le Modèle
Sur la Théorie de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme.
375pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 005463 9

To read Françoise Choay's book in London is to do it an injustice, because her achievement and her attitude are quite unlike those of anyone in this country. She is an intellectual (I use the term both as description and in praise) trained as a philosopher, who has chosen to concern herself primarily with architecture and town-planning. In this country architecture is, after all, a profession—with all the philistine associations that word evokes: architects are not expected to be *artists* any more than barristers (never mind solicitors) are *lawyers* or GPs *physicians*. In France the profession of architect has become even further removed from its historical role, and is now much more a branch of management.

The grotesque decline of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts over the past century, (through which most "practitioners" in France have inevitably passed) is an index of what I mean. Tony Garnier was the last really important architectural recipient of the Prix de Rome—and that was in 1904! For an architect to be an intellectual (as Le Corbusier certainly was) invited suspicion. For an intellectual, a man of letters or even a painter to take an interest in architecture was virtually unheard of: with the olympian exception of Paul Valéry's *Eupalinos*. The certainties codified at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with all the authority of the Grandes Ecoles behind them, were largely to blame: the great mass of building patronized by a colonizing French government did not invite questioning of the kind proposed by Hippolyte Taine or Viollet-le-Duc. Architects' training consisted of reach-me-down rules and the acquisition of a near-miraculous drawing technique which ably concealed the weakness of their designs behind layers of watercolour wash, while distracting students from the intellectual problems inparable from the business of building. The remoteness of this procedure from the architects' real preoccupations meant that it had no influence at all in the drawing office or on the building site.

During the Pompidou régime even the authorities (jolted by the events of 1968, which centred on a disaffected Ecole des Beaux Arts) finally become convinced of the infinitude of French architects and of their training, as compared with those of Italy or the Anglo-Saxon countries. They promoted international competitions, as well as a flurry of "architectural research" financed by various government agencies. The exhibitions they have described absorbed the money and threw out a shower of study papers for circulation, as well as various dubious publications, most of which should sink into the limbo of remaindered.

Against this background a number of individuals stand out, and Mme Choay is among the most important of them. Others realized that there was intellectual work to be undertaken in the building domain: notably the group which produced the magazine *Utopie*, among whom Jean Baudrillard was to become the best known. One or two of the younger architects and historians who attended Roland Barthes's and Michel Foucault's seminars in Paris have created a new climate of thought in a situation made all the more uncomfortable by the horrors bequeathed by the French building boom.

Mme Choay's first important book was an anthology, *L'Urbanisme, Utopies et Réalités*, which first appeared in 1965; in it she set extracts from the writings of social reformers who treat of the city and its architecture only incidentally, such as Robert Owen or Peter Kropotkin, side by side with those architects who see the new architecture and the new city which it is to build as a portent, or even as the agent of a new society, whether through a return to some ideal situation in the past, as in the case of Pugin, or by foreseeing a splendid technological solution to all our problems in the not-too-distant future, as with Yannis Xenakis.

Already in that first book Mme Choay organized her refractory material in terms of a binary classification: there were "progressist" utopians, like Robert Owen, Jules Verne or Le Corbusier, and "culturalist" ones—like Pugin, Camillo Sitte or Ebenezer Howard. But she found this model dualism constricting, since some of her most important witnesses had to be put down either as model-less pragmatists (Marx, Engels) or as anti-urbanists (Frank Lloyd Wright). Then there were "functional" critics of the city such as Eugène Hénard (the now largely forgotten deviser of the traffic roundabout) or Colin Buchanan; and the "philosophers" of the city, from Victor Hugo to Martin Heidegger.

The dualism was rationalized in a rather disingenuous way: the "progressists" turn their attention to the future by ignoring the past, the "culturalists" claim to be agnostic about any future which is not an extrapolation from the past or present. But both groups, indeed anyone who makes a pretence of having rational proposals for the future of the city, assume that they need a "scientific" justification for their proposals. But the very heterogeneity of the material Mme Choay had assembled led her to conclude that the scientific pretensions of planners were hollow, since they were used to support conflicting proposals. In spite of which, planners tend to speak with a positive, imperious assurance, as if their proposals were based on uncontrovertible data, had the force of unquestioned laws, and even of moral imperative.

The motive behind that first book, Mme Choay now says, was her indignation: and although she kept it all too carefully in check in her text, no one who has visited Paris in the past few years can blame her for feeling it. The same indignation, subsiding now into an "étonnement réfléchi", has inspired her new work on the origins of planning theory. As she says in the first paragraph, the subject of *La Règle et le modèle* is a reflection on built space, and therefore on the city. But she is concerned only with the "written" city, the city of text and speculation (she is perhaps unduly defensive about this self-imposed limitation); and in particular with two books which she considers wholly revolutionary, and "without real precedent": Alberti's *De re Aedificatoria*, which provides the rule of her title, and More's *Utopia*, which is its *modèle*.

Her interpretation of both texts is very attentive: on both she has interesting and new things to say. She champions, for instance, the integrity of the text revived, pointed text of Alberti against the jeers of his "higher" critics, and suggests a convincing structure for the book in terms of its argument. The crossed relationship Alberti wants to establish with his one (paradoxical) predecessor, Vitruvius, while maintaining his own originality, is sharply observed. On More, her reconstruction of physical space in Amaurotum and the other Utopian cities is valuable, and goes well beyond the usual cobbling together of the few precisions on which More based his description.

Mme Choay's method, however, is perhaps a little inhibiting: early in the book she enumerates the proper characteristics of a treatise (rule) or of a utopia (model) then, in the second part proceeds to mark down those derivatives of her two archetypes which do not conform to her criteria. In one or two cases, fascinating and influential books, such as the *Hypnerotomachia Polyphili*, which stands about half-way between rule and model, are excluded altogether. But in this second part, in spite of its limitations, there are excellent things to be found, such as Mme Choay's discussion of Claude Perrault's *Abrégé de Vitruve*, the little pamphlet through which architectural Cartesianism forced itself on public attention. The climax comes with the publication of Ideifonso Cerdà's *Teoria General de Urbanización*, which claims to convert received discourses on building into a science, and which appeared in 1867, the same year as the first volume of *Das Kapital*.

There are therefore two stages in the process described in Mme Choay's book. The first *coupure* (to use the now familiar French word) is that in which an autonomous discourse about building, the building of cities—a discourse which claims to have internal rules—becomes possible, in the fifteenth century. The second *coupure* falls when external circumstances present the theorist with a city in which the discourse, as Cerdà conceived, no longer has any power, and the theorist must come forward as a diagnostician of morbid or diseased urban tissues, and prescribe scientific remedies. Beyond this the whole nature of the speculative enterprise changes.

The second *coupure* was marked by the publication of Cerdà's book: urbanism, the word he coined for the new science he was proposing, transformed the designer-demiurge of the earlier treatises to a dominant with whom one might even reason) into the laboratory scientist applying tested theories. Although Cerdà was a successful practitioner and his book was a *post-facto* justification of the plan for the expansion of Barcelona already adopted by the Spanish government, his book was little read. It remained neglected even though its title passed into common parlance and the stance which Cerdà advocated became commonplace among architects and planners. It may be argued, as Mme Choay does argue, that part of our problem today may be attributed to the petrification of theoretical discourse on the utopian model. Certainly, she is right in identifying Cerdà as the repressed ancestor of the modern planner. This is the justification of her method. And even if I would have preferred to arrive at such a conclusion by a slightly different route, I am wholly convinced by it.

David Piper's *Companion Guide to London*—surely the most perceptive, evocative and readable of the myriad books on the city which have come out since the war—has been produced in an attractive illustrated edition, to be published on October 27 (286pp. with 48pp in colour, plus 150 black-and-white illustrations. Collins. £9.95. 0 00 216287 3). In his foreword to what is an admirable visual complement to Piper's book, *The London Book* (Over 2,000 black-and-white illustrations. Bergström plus Boyle Books. £9.95. 0 903767 15 5), Sir Hugh Casson describes it as "a picture book about London . . . not about buildings, streets, parks, squares and monuments but about those details of which all these architectural elements are composed—such as: fanlights and coal holes, bollards and lamp posts, pillar boxes, street signs, doors and door knockers". The book is edited by Ian Hessenberr.

Wanting and having

By Don Locke

ROBIN BARROW:
Happiness
160 pp. Oxford: Martin Robertson. £10 (paperback, £4.95).
0 85520 266 1

ELIZABETH TELFER:
Happiness
144 pp. Macmillan. £9.
0 333 28082 2

Imagine a middle-aged executive with a large and comfortable house, car, salary and wife. A rich and varied existence: elaborate meals in expensive restaurants, holidays in exotic places, a succession of mistresses selected from his more attractive secretaries. And yet he finds life unsatisfying. His career, he realises, has gone as far as it will go; his job and his family begin to bore him. He is drinking more heavily; an ulcer is on the way; no doubt a coronary also. In short, the male menopause.

Then one day, driving drunk after a bitter day in the office and the break-up of his latest affair, his car smashes into a tree. He is seriously injured, and though he survives he is reduced, mentally and emotionally, to the level of a child of four or five. There he is, surrounded by his caring family, his every need catered for, warm, well-fed, entertained, with little memory of, and less concern for, the life which late he led. Two friends come to visit. "How terrible", says one, shocked at what he finds. "And yet", says the other, who imagines he has more insight into the previous situation, "he is happier than before".

Is he? It is tempting to say, straight away, that he is not *really* happy. But "really" here, as often, is an intensifier, an adverb which asks for more than the adjective needs to deliver. Most circles are not really round, especially when I draw them, but that does not mean it is false to describe them as round, or as circles. To think so is to restrict circles to perfect circles, of which there are presumably none in existence. Similarly the argument, recently revived, that we cannot know something unless we are really sure of it, and since we cannot *really* be sure of anything, we therefore know nothing. But to say that we cannot really be sure of anything is not to deny that in the ordinary, unqualified sense of the term, there are some things we are sure of. And similarly, to insist that our ex-executive is, in some suitably strengthened sense, not really happy, is not to deny that, in a perfectly straightforward sense, he is happy none the less.

It seems at first sight—but only at first sight—that these two recent authorities would agree. Both Robin Barrow and Elizabeth Telfer adopt, with differing emphases, the contemporary orthodoxy which defines happiness not in terms of pleasure, but in terms of the satisfaction of desire.

Crudely, a man is happy when he lives the life he wants to live, when the world is, for him, as he wants it to be—something which, as both authors remind us, can be achieved either by reality matching up to our expectations, or by our expectations matching down to reality. The latter has always seemed the more practical policy, but in place of the Stoical abnegation of unsatisfiable desire, we now have the spectacle of laboratory rats working a treadle five to seven thousand times an hour, ignoring food, drink, sex and even pain as they do so, in order to stimulate the "pleasure-centres" of the brain. And if they are happy, why not our executive?

If you think you are happy, both our authorities insist, then you *are* happy. Any temptation to think otherwise seems due to the failure to distinguish clearly, as Telfer certainly does, between happiness in the ordinary sense of the term—what might more perspicuously be labelled hedonistic happiness—and the Aristoteleian notion of *eudaemonia*, which unfortunately gets translated as happiness, though actually meaning something like "good fortune" or "the life worth living". Our executive clearly lacks *eudaemonia*, but he seems happy enough with his lot: there is nothing major which he wants but does not have, or has but does not want.

Yet these are, Telfer insists, only necessary conditions. Happiness also involves being pleased with your life as a whole, and it is not clear whether the executive satisfies this sufficient condition, perhaps because he has some lingering dissatisfaction with the sort of life he now leads, despite having all immediate needs and desires satisfied, perhaps because he is incapable of the conception of his life as a whole which Telfer evidently requires.

There is an equivalent uncertainty in Barrow's formulation. Happiness, for him, consists in seeing the world as you would like it to be. But this presupposes not merely the satisfaction of particular desires, but some conception of how the world should be, and if our executive now lacks that then he presumably possesses neither happiness nor unhappiness, but is ineligible for both. Happiness, it seems, involves the satisfaction of second-order desires, desires about desires, a point that both authors come close to, but neither makes much of: the crucial question is not whether I have what I want, but whether I have the desires I want to have, and have those desires satisfied. If this question does not arise for the executive—or for the laboratory rat—then he is not happy, but not unhappy either. But insofar as it does arise, it seems that he is not happy after all.

Barrow and Telfer agree in much of substance, but differ markedly in style. Barrow writes as a teacher for teachers, Telfer as a philosopher for philosophers—though one hopes the two are not mutually exclusive. Barrow begins, accordingly, with empirical claims about happiness, and throws in a discussion of some familiar aphorisms, as a means of attracting the wandering attention. His treatment of his chosen authorities is clearly derived from, and intended for, a lecture course (for next week's seminar please read Lloyd Thomas) for those who might have difficulty in understanding, and certainly in evaluating, the arguments of others. The second part of his book neatly draws the strings together, in some conclusions of his own. Telfer, by contrast, prefers argument to exegesis. Beginning from the distinction between hedonistic happiness and *eudaemonia*, we get first an analysis of each, then an account of their relationship and finally the role of both as an end of life.

It is not, I hope, just professional prejudice which leads me to prefer Telfer's treatment, while recommending Barrow to beginners. Telfer's is certainly the more difficult, though also the more rewarding, a book of philosophy rather than a book about it. But having worked your way through her careful distinctions and meticulous arguments the discussion of the relationship between *eudaemonia* and hedonistic happiness is a particularly impressive piece of work—it is salutary to return to the empirical claims with which Barrow begins. What can such people, philosophers and psychologists, have to say to each other about a topic like this? And if not why not?

In revulsion is our beginning

By Annette Lavers

JULIA KRISTEVA:
Pouvoirs de l'horreur
Essai sur l'abjection
251pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 005539 2

Despite several well-publicized switches in its political allegiance, *Tel Quel*—the review with which Julia Kristeva has long been associated and which gives its name to the series in which her latest book is published—stands for certain attitudes which never varied: a desire to weld together the findings of the social sciences into a theory of meaning or "semanalysis"; an interest in the wider socio-political picture, and a prophetic bent which accords literature an exalted role as both index and agent of social and cultural change.

Pouvoirs de l'horreur runs true to type, being an attempt to give a general account of the genesis of the human subject and of society as an institution. It recalls, in its vast scope, similar attempts by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari or René Girard, although its promises are sharply opposed to theirs. It is centred on the category of "abjection", which spans physical repulsion, taboos and purification rituals, and their counterparts in our "desacralized" society. Kristeva first gives a phenomenological description of the "abject" and then seeks its foundations in a boldly revisionist psychoanalytical overview. Next she traces the evolution of social attempts to codify this irrepressible phenomenon, by means of equally innovatory views on anthropology and the history of religions; and she ends with a long study of the themes and the style of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, taken to be the epitome of the contemporary writer as "subject of abjection".

Giddiness or vomiting, disgust and horror at the sight of certain foods, bodily secretion and corpses are universally interpreted as evidence of rejection and Kristeva suggests that the capability for revulsion may be the first faint sign of a feeling of identity in the human individual. She suggests that this first manifestation of the subject springs from "the immemorial violence with which a body has to become separate in order to be", and that this explains the mixture of fascination and repulsion which abjection provokes: it is inseparable from memories of your opaque and forgotten intimacy with the mother's body. All this happens long before we encounter what psychoanalysis recognizes as desire and object relations, which only occur in the Oedipal phase when a third person, the father, forces us by his interdictions to enter the order of the symbolic, of language and society.

Kristeva introduces her new concepts at a time when psychoanalysis is said to be going through a crisis. There are many areas of indeterminacy in Freudian theory, showing it to be still a "work in progress". The notion of primary repression, for instance, has long been shown to involve an infinite regress unless one supposes that phylogenetic factors play a part in structuring the unconscious. Since the notion of "drive" in Freud does not involve a predetermined object, Kristeva can show objection to be a kind of narcissism which is threatening because it is the unleashing of an objectless drive. Fear is primary and objects are the answer to it. Analysis of this fear may require a "fetish" to conceal the void which lies (according to her) beneath the unconscious, or primary process. And what better fetish could there be than language, which has the actual structure of a fetish as defined by Octave Mannoni: "I know (that the mother does not have a phallus, that words are not things), but all the same . . .". Abjection is a great producer of culture.

So although Kristeva's elaboration of her earlier theory of the constitution of the subject through language may look at first as if it is emancipated here from Lacan's reading of Freud, it is actually a powerful reinforcement of that reading. Kristeva has her own version of the primal scene; a vision of the child convulsed with disgust yet realizing he must win recognition through a kind of death, or acceptance of the parents' desire. The paternal function is seen as the cornerstone of all order and meaning.

This unconditional socialization (i.e sexualization) of processes which might seem to be in part natural is also noticeable in the anthropological part of the book. Freud laid equal stress on the taboo on murder and that on incest, but since Freud the implications of the father's murder have perhaps been over-emphasized. Kristeva accepts Lévi-Strauss's view of the incest taboo, that it is an instrument for the structuring of society.

But she argues that a semantic dimension must be added to the syntactic one if we are to explain how subjects submit themselves to such laws. Taboos bearing on excremental and menstrual products are found in the last analysis to involve a desire to subjugate women, seen as possessing a threatening power. The examples Kristeva gives show that this interpretation has considerable force. But the place of women in society is in a sense the real subject of the book, and the prospects seem gloomy. Kristeva acknowledges that anyone wishing to explore the origins of society and language can only do so by inventing a "fiction" which explains them. Yet we find here an attempt to define the psychoanalyst as a man or woman "without qualities"; the analyst's in fact, is the position of ultimate power, from which any other discourse, be it that of the ethnologist or the feminist, can be treated as a resistance.

Yet if one source of abjection is a feeling of emptiness springing from "the mother's silent hatred for the father's word", one could argue that a society where mothers don't have to use children to secure their own recognition might offer a better kind of welcome for the child. This might well be achieved if we put less stress on the dichotomy between culture and nature. This new dualism, based on linguistics and psychoanalysis, has now replaced the old ontological dualism of the existentialists. Critics of Sartre (whose *Nausea* Kristeva cites as a source), as well as the proponents of what is now known in France as the "new anthropology", have preferred to stress processes common to both nature and man. It is surely inaccurate to claim that such people lack all "sense of the sacred" and indeed Kristeva admits she has ignored the more optimistic aspects of religion, what Freud evoked as "the face of the young Persian God bathed in light". Finally, as Lacan used once to acknowledge, the fact that humans are under the impression that they can pass moral judgments and "commit" themselves must be taken into account not only if society is to function but if our mental life is to become intelligible.

Whatever affection one may feel for Céline's extraordinary genius (admirably explored here) one cannot forget that this paragon of "self-abjection" contributed, however indirectly, to create the heap of children's shoes seen at Auschwitz (which Kristeva gives as an example of something which causes horror in us). His pamphlets are treated by her not only as symptoms of their author's condition, but as acute diagnoses of the society he hated. This is only acceptable if we agree that all the values which came down to us from the Enlightenment have now collapsed.

If we do not so agree, then we have to adjudge the current excesses of such ideological "prophets" as the ayatollahs or the French New Right to be, not the latest gadget of a bored consumer society, but a compensation for real socio-economic grievances.

Stardom among the ruins

By Jillian Becker

CHRISTIANE F.:
II
Autobiography of a Child Prostitute and Heroin Addict
Translated by Susanne Flatauer
282pp. Arlington Books. £6.50.
0 85140 485 5

When Christiane F. was thirteen years old, she began to frequent a youth club run by the Protestant Church in an overcrowded district of West Berlin. There she started smoking hashish, taking "uppers and downers" and "tripping" on LSD. Before her fourteenth birthday in 1976, she "snorted" heroin for the first time at a discotheque. Soon she was injecting it. To finance her addiction she became a prostitute, going every afternoon after school to those places, usually Zoo station, where clients came to pick up "B.Ps." (baby prostitutes) of both sexes. It was a life of squalor, degradation, fear, misery, crime and sickness. Dozens of child addicts died every year. Christiane attempted suicide with an overdose, but survived.

The sight of addicts should be enough to put children off heroin. Thin, haggard, dirty, unkempt, yellow, they bleed and blister all over their bodies, not only because of the needles, but because they itch maddeningly and scratch themselves with hairbrushes and pocket knives. But still we addicts are eager to join the ranks of such as these. Why? For Christiane it was the very ruin of the human being which she found admirable. It filled her with envy and the desire to emulate such heroes. In her eyes to be "fucked up" was to be "great", "a star", "really together".

Christiane's story is told for the most part in her own words, taken down (and presumably edited, but skilfully, into coherence and readability) by two journalists, Kai Hermann and Horst Rieck. But others have their say: Christiane's mother, the pastor of the youth club, a policeman and policewoman, and two psychologists. Christiane emerges as a child who lacked—and by the time she came to tell her story knew that she needed—authoritative guidance. She was a show-off, though without real self-confidence; longed to be part of a group that attracted attention, and to be a "star" in it. She came upon a group of heroin addicts, and joined them by doing as they did; just as others a few years older than she, moved by the same kind of urge, joined terrorist groups—which Christiane also admired.

Many fixers thought the terrorists absolutely fantastic. There were fixers who tried to get into terrorism before they turned on to H. And when the Schleyer kidnap took place it somehow turned me on to.

Drugs, terrorism, mystical sects—the would-be fixers will seize on any of them to gratify their emotional needs, even or especially if doing so destroys themselves and others. ("I did want to ask . . . why in the world does a fixer stay alive? Only to ruin others as well.") Self-absorbed, lost, aimless people—ready for a leader to take them all in?

Somehow I should have liked to have been a youngster during the Nazi period. At least young people then . . . still had ideals.

Some of the adult commentators ascribe drug-taking among children to economic and social causes. The Protestant pastor attached to the youth club where many children started taking them blames "capitalism". The psychologists blame "commodity producers". They all, even the mother who did what any mother would do to save her daughter, but as a parent could not avoid blaming herself, imply that Christiane's addiction was partly caused by an unhappy family background and unsatisfactory living conditions.

Those long on explanation are short on moral condemnation. Indeed, drug-taking seems to have been condoned, even encouraged, by some who made themselves responsible for counselling the young. At the youth club, social workers "from the student movement" who took drugs themselves, talked about them fascinatingly to ignorant newcomers, adding mild warnings not to start on the "hard" stuff. Later the club was turned into a drug counselling service for the proliferating numbers of hard-drug addicts in the district.

Berlin brimmed with advisory centres. Yet Christiane's desperate mother could find no reliable professional treatment for her daughter. Eventually she sent Christiane away from Berlin, to kindly but disciplinarian relations in West Germany, where the child did make a real effort to keep off heroin. At the time the book went to print she had succeeded in staying off it for one year. But she continued to seek escape from reality in "soft" drugs, drink, and irrational cults.

It may be that the book itself has done something useful for Christiane, not merely because it may have appeased, at least temporarily, her craving to be a star, but more importantly because in order to tell her story she had to confront the truth about herself objectively. On the whole she has done so with impressive candour, taking a large measure of responsibility for her own choices and actions:

So it wasn't at all that poor little me was being deliberately tempted by a wicked fixer or dealer, as the papers always report. I know no one who was led into temptation literally against his will. Most youngsters get to H of their own accord when they're ready for it—as I was.

Ambiguity in action

By Marcia Pointon

KATHRYN MOORE HELENIAK:
William Mulready
286pp. Yale University Press, £25.
0 300 02311 1

William Mulready, born in Ireland in 1786 the son of a leather breeches maker, became one of the most highly regarded and sought after Royal Academicians of the early Victorian era. His life-size portrait appears alongside those of Cimabue, Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo in the mosaics that decorate the south court of the Victoria and Albert Museum. He was the only English artist to be thus honoured. It was not, initially, the Establishment art world that offered Mulready encouragement. William Godwin took an interest in the nineteen-year-old artist and employed him to illustrate the Juvenile Library, one of the ventures through which Godwin and Mary Jane Clarement tried desperately to make ends meet during the first decade of the century. He also wrote an account of the young Mulready's exemplary efforts to improve himself and establish his independence that was intended to inspire young readers to do likewise. Later, Henry Cole enjoyed Mulready's close friendship and Lady Eastlake, who entertained the artist to dinner, regarded him as "gentlemanly, manly and prepossessing".

Should he stumble unawares upon "The Wolf and the Lamb" hanging in the Queen's Gallery, or find the small but brilliant collection of Mulready's work shown in the V & A or discover his robust cottage subjects hanging near the Norwich School painters in the Tate, the discriminating observer is often pleasantly surprised. But it is easy to miss Mulready. His total oeuvre is small and much of it is in private collections. It has recently become fashionable to disinter forgotten groups of Victorian artists. Faced with their productions one sometimes feels that they were hidden from view with good reason. But Mulready is not in this category and his work eminently deserves to be presented again to the public.

Kathryn Moore Heleniak has fulfilled this task with notable success, and in a style both cheerful and businesslike. She takes us tactfully and wisely through Mulready's early life, his marriage to the sister of a fellow artist and teacher (John Varley), his subsequent trials and tribulations as a separated single parent responsible for four children (and threatened by his wife with public exposure for homosexual and heterosexual infidelities). No wonder Hodges and Eaton could find little to say about Mulready in their book on the lives of Royal Academicians (1905) and confined themselves to the comment: "of Mulready's private life very little is known, but he was a man who throughout his long life kept himself very much to himself". Mulready is the classic exemplar of the nineteenth-century Establishment figure who, with the connivance of close friends and contemporary biographers, succeeded in presenting to the world the image of bland piety that was a prerequisite for professional success while living an extremely unorthodox life.

Chapters on Mulready's landscapes, his scenes of childhood, courtship and literary themes, the nudes, and patrons, pupils and portraits are followed and supported by a comprehensive illustrated catalogue. The book has 200 black-and-white illustrations and eight colour plates, all of excellent quality. The entire production should ensure that Mulready is now granted his rightful position as an important and original nineteenth-century artist. Authority scholars are few, but as one who has sought to find a way through the confusing mass of contemporary anecdote, diverse sales and obscure private collections in order to identify and authenticate Mulready's work, I can say with some authority that Dr Heleniak has been, at the very least, tirelessly thorough in her documentation.

Her conclusions are in the main sound; I would take issue with her over very few. She excludes the Fitzwilliam Museum's attractive "Farrier's Shop" on grounds of provenance and handling. Yet F. G. Stephens, who knew the artist and his work as thoroughly as anyone, thought it authentic. The fact that it belonged to Mrs Gibbons rather than Mr Gibbons (who bought several of Mulready's works) does not prove that it was purchased after 1851 (the date of Mr Gibbons's death), nor is the fact that it was not included in the 1864 exhibition after the artist's death conclusive evidence against its authenticity. I would give the picture a date of around 1810. There are certainly differences in handling between the "Farrier's Shop" and "The Mall" of 1812 in the V & A but they are slight and it is, in any case, difficult to establish an absolute frame of reference for Mulready's technique in these early years, especially when so much work is still missing. The painting exemplifies Mulready's major preoccupations in landscape painting at this time, namely, variations in light and changes in weather, detailed observation of an actual scene (on the left-hand side of the farrier's shed can be seen the marks where a poster has once been stuck), desultory human activity in a landscape that is open in format and distanced from the viewer, and a concern with literal transcription expressed through a deliberate lack of organization in the foreground area.

The drawing which Heleniak illustrates (plate 89) as a sketch for "The Fight Interrupted" seems not to be connected with this painting but with the earlier "Boys Playing Cricket" (1810, missing). All the preparatory studies for "The Fight Interrupted" show the compositions already worked out. Plate 89 shows a completely different composition which corresponds closely to descriptions of the lost painting ("a hat representing the stumps lies in the foreground", the "marvellously wrought" grey trunk of the "old and picturesque tree"). In "The Fight Interrupted", a schoolmaster separates two boys who are fighting. Here one young cricketer hides in a tree while an irate adult is energetically directed by other members of the team away from the hiding place.

Mulready's most notable works are those depicting children and scenes of courtship. "I", these seemingly benign scenes, says Heleniak, "social repression, agression, xenophobia and eroticism emerge". It is right not to consider these paintings as merely anecdotal and Heleniak has many perceptive and illuminating comments to make on pictures like "Now Jump" (a terrified child being cajoled into jumping off a wall) and "Open your mouth and shut your eyes" (a nubile girl ready to receive a cherry from a fine young man).

In the "First Voyage" a nervous child in a tub is pulled across a pond by an adolescent brother while poker-faced father and mother—the latter still fully clothed in bonnet and all, although apparently semi-submerged—anxiously look on. Whether one can seriously relate this slightly ludicrous scene to the romantic symbolism of the storm-tossed boat, as Heleniak does, is doubtful. The classical Poseidon-like pose of the boy to which she draws attention does not automatically confer universal and metaphorical value on this rather silly scene. Mulready had not, after all, had the opportunity of reading Lorenz Eitner's excellent article on the imagery of open windows and storm-tossed boats.

Heleniak's study is well-balanced on the whole and highly informative. If it has a fault it is that its author is too bookish, too anxious to establish a relationship between the artist's work and all those Victorian preoccupations and obsessions that have provided the subjects of so many frank literary and historical appraisals during the past twenty years. The many footnotes bulge with references to secondary sources and tangential matter or else to works and figures that are so well known as to seem scarcely worth citing (does mention of the picturesque really require a footnote listing Uvedale Price *et al*?).

More important, this zealous attention to the social and historical context is occasionally at the expense of an understanding of the paintings as works of art. Mulready was deeply concerned with formal problems; he was undeniably, of all the Victorians, the artist's artist. Heleniak suggests that his habit of commenting on other artists' work was resented, but there is plenty of evidence that his criticism was actively sought. Samuel Palmer took good note of the older artist's remarks about drawing and E. W. Cooke recorded in his unpublished diary (not referred to here) in August 1835, that Mulready "criticized my picture with great advantage to me". "Brother and Sister" (V & A) may well be, as Heleniak suggests, a painting about young love, the baby becoming, as in the similar "First Love", an "undeniable if unconscious sign or symbol of the longed-for sexual union . . . for children presented a constant and ever present reminder of sexual activity than unacknowledged in polite English society". But the artist was also, clearly, thinking of the pictorial problems inherent in treating groups of three (that is why so many of Mulready's pictures have overtones of Christian iconography) and the challenge of making a picture with a young woman's back as the primary motif. Once you look at it this way the pictorial allusions to the similar female figures in the left foreground of Raphael's "Mass at Bolsena" and "Expulsion of Heliodorus" are immediately apparent.

Two of Mulready's most intriguing paintings feature prominently members of alien races. "Train up a child" contains three Indian lascar beggars to whom alms are about to be given by a slightly reluctant white child accompanied by two well-dressed white ladies. "The Toy Seller" shows a large negro offering a toy to a frightened white baby who recoils in its mother's arms. Heleniak gives a fascinating outline history of blacks in eighteenth and nineteenth-century art and literature and points out that Mulready's treatment of the black "says something more specific [than general images of noble savages] about growing prejudices and reviving racist fears". Mulready's "fear", she remarks, "seems sadly misplaced in such scenes". If she means what she seems to mean, that Mulready himself was experiencing growing prejudice and reviving racist fear, and that he therefore painted pictures in which his own fears are portrayed in the alarmed response of the white child, then it has to be said that there is absolutely no evidence for this in either picture and it is not suggested that there is any evidence elsewhere. The negro toy-seller is sympathetically portrayed; it is the pampered blonde baby who fails to strike a chord now and probably looked indulged also to Mulready's contemporaries

In any case, it is surely true that Mulready was primarily concerned less with social events than with psychological drama. His strength lies in ambiguous situations pictorially conveyed. There is no knowing which "side" he is on in these confrontations. In the case of "Train up a child", the evidence strongly suggests that Mulready was deeply understanding of, and sympathetic to, the plight of the Indians. They are hardly "fearsome" in their tattered Oriental finery. The picture was, after all, painted for Thomas Baring, who had the closest family connections with the East India Company, and it was painted in 1841 when *The Times* carried a number of articles (not mentioned by Heleniak) expressing serious and informed concern about the problems of lascar seamen in London. The picture is problematic, we cannot be certain whose Mulready's sympathies lay but it is surely not primarily a celebration of the "myth of British imperial beneficence".

Mulready is indeed a much more difficult artist than a first look at some of his pictures of children and young lovers would suggest. The more his work is exposed to view, the more unanswerable some of the questions seem to be. Why does the gamekeeper's wife in "Interior: an English Cottage" turn away so dolefully from the cheerful figure of her husband waving to her against the sunset on the distant horizon? What can be the role of the huddled group of an old man and a nursing mother in the corner of the schoolroom of "The Last In"? What is "The Artist's Study" about? Is the artist going to paint a picture of the baby lying sleeping on a piece of ecclesiastical stuff and, if so, why is there a large gilt frame on his easel? Why is a painting called "The Careless Messenger" apparently about a careless nurse?

The sheer visual delight of Mulready's work—his marvellous drawing technique, the vibrant colour of his paintings and the fine reflections of Heliodorus" so cherished by private collectors—is admirably conveyed in Kathryn Moore Heleniak's book. Its publication will, it is to be hoped, not only bring more of the work of this fascinating and fine artist into public view but also encourage other publishers to issue some of Mulready's more worthy contemporaries with comparable seriousness and scholarship.

Memorials of anonymity

By Tom Paulin

JAMES AYRES:
English Naïve Painting 1750-1900
168pp. 151 illustrations. Thames and Hudson, £10.
0 500 23303 X

In his conclusion to *The Century of Revolution*, Christopher Hill suggests that recorded history is like "a photograph of an iceberg":

> it deals only with what is visible above the surface. Yet below the surface is the vast mass of the population, surviving sometimes in records when they are born, married, accused of crime, or buried; but otherwise leaving no trace. Through all the far-reaching changes of this century which affected the upper classes, the labour of peasants, craftsmen, mariners went on relatively unchanged. We can trace the humblest of the propertied classes in their wills: but at least fifty per cent of the population had nothing to leave.

In various ways this collection of naïve paintings offers a vision of the anonymous unpropertied life which underlies visible history. The vernacular artist is essentially a memorialist: his art is like that in a Balkan peasant graveyard where wooden effigies present a characteristic likeness of the buried individual. Naïve painting largely disappeared with the invention of photography, and although the vernacular artist was never a photo-realist his works resemble old photographs in the dry atmosphere of mortality which clings to them. His icons are secular, humanist, strangely static—often they have a kippered glaze—and vigorously utilitarian.

Both Andras Kalman (author of this book's preface) and James Ayres point to the difficulties of writing about vernacular painting, and they also signal their dissatisfaction with "conventional art history". One notices how curiously paintings and the English class system are intertwined, and although James Ayres argues that the non-academic tradition "was constantly injecting life into the world of 'acceptable' art", many of the works he includes are quaintly grotesque rather than invariably naive. Really, this is Tristan da Cunha art: it sees both marooned and mentally functional. It has all the sturdy Victorian homelessness and national pride of a ship in a bottle. Yet such works as "The Royal Rat Catcher", "Model Butcher's Shop", "The Rat Pit" and "Bear Baiting" express a distinctively social savagery. This is the society of the inn, not the country house: there is a beefy emphasis on clay pipes, pint pots, prize bulls, prize-fighters and clockwork horses.

Many works of naive art were made as keepsakes for the families of soldiers and sailors, and what is fascinating about these and most other examples of vernacular painting is a quality of trapped optimism, of tender stoicism. The keepsake object preserves and sentimentalizes, yet at the same time it communicates a half-awareness of being the muscle on which an Empire depends. Just as the Bagnet children in *Bleak House* are named for their father's postings (Woolwich, Malta and Quebec), so the figures in these paintings appear to be regimented. The works let us guess at what it was like to be fodder for cannons and captains of industry, to live anonymously below recorded history. Thus the three watercoloured and acquatinted figures in "Joseph Postell, Wife and Child, 1844, of Her Majesty's 21st Regiment, Or Royal North British Fusiliers" combine British pride with fatalism and a sense of personal vulnerability. Any sense of national superiority is more than offset by a poignant ordinariness, a feeling of personal powerlessness (the child's bonnet looks like a halo and this emphasizes the private and domestic sanctity). And the gawping thoughtful man who is caged with his charges in "The Lion Tamer" seems to be staring, helpless, at a sudden awareness of his freakish anonymity.

Many of these works are connected with the sideshows of touring fairs, and possess a terrible and poignant mortality. The wisely pensive ram in "The Prize Ram", like the subjects in the other livestock pictures, is distended by human greed and cruelty. As James Ayres remarks, these animals are "grotesques of nature corrupted by man". The sense of being trapped and used is always paramount.

The best painting here is Walter Greaves's magnificent "Hammersmith Bridge on Boat Race Day", a brilliantly suspended composition which must owe something to Japanese prints. It is in no sense a naive painting, however, and it converts oddly with such representative works as "Old Brighton, the Postman", "John Brown aged 3 years, the 9 of February 1855" and "Profile of an Old Lady Taking Snuff". John Booth Higginson's "Still Life with Cheshire Cheese" (1869) is a distinguished composition which has a cubist angularity and flatness, but Mr Ayres's note is too helpfully particular: "The cheese is provided with a cheese cradle, and the corkscrew has a brush for brushing the cork".

Perhaps this gives a clue to the failure of the English naive tradition during this period—it is unable to redeem and transform a banal ordinariness. These artists have neither the utopian vision of an Edward Hicks, nor Douanier Rousseau's wonderful power of making popular trees, railings and suburban telegraph cables into images of a mysterious actuality. Their art is reminiscent of a tatonist's parlour—it is sadly corporeal and without a glimpse of the sacred. As insights into buried historical experience these works are fascinating, but this means that they serve values other than those which must be prized in the exercise of aesthetic judgment. And to assert this is not necessarily to cherish Mr Ayres's twin bugbears—the English class system and "conventional art history".

The British Museum's vast collections of prints and drawings are slowly being made available to public notice not only through select exhibitions but in an accelerated series of books. Prints and drawings obviously lend themselves better to reproduction than most other visual art forms, and a recent volume, Nicholas Turner's *Italian Baroque Drawings* (151pp. British Museum Publications. £6.95. 0 7141 8025 4) contains sixty-five beautiful black-and-white plates of work by artists from the Roman school: Carracci to the Neopolitan Luca Giordano.

Post-representational evaluations

By Robert Boyers

DONALD B. KUSPIT:
Clement Greenberg, Art Critic
215pp. University of Wisconsin Press. $15.
0 299 079 007

No one who has tried to write about the art of this century has had an easy time of it. Journalists writing one or two pieces about art each week may do a satisfactory job of describing the "look" or, occasionally, the apparent intention of a painting but they must usually be content to offer in place of criticism or analysis an opinion or estimate. Critics employed by monthly or quarterly art journals may have more leisure and more space, but usually find there is little they can add to the summary accounts offered by front-line journalists. Occasionally contexts are invoked, comparisons risked, a scheme of development charted. But these are most often handled tentatively, with no accompanying suggestion that any insight be taken for a general truth. Unstable and unpredictable as the art scene has been, critics opt for a genial pluralism in place of polemic and the building of those value-hierarchies which still characterize critical activity in the area of the literary arts. No wonder painters often complain that at present there are no more than one or two reliable critics, that even the better ones are more interested in displaying their openness to new sensations than in trying to discriminate between one achievement and another. It may once have been thought that avant-garde painters and sculptors resented or had no use for criticism. In fact, they have shown a remarkable readiness to embrace or at least to take seriously the judgments of even minimally sympathetic critics, and their complaints about the quality of the writing may be taken to express a genuine regret that they have no one to rely on.

In the United States, only Clement Greenberg may be said to have got through to painters in a way most of them can admire. Those he has chosen to ignore in the course of forty active years may feel hurt or bitter, but there is little doubt they would like to have been treated with the care he alone has been able to bring to their contemporaries. Some may prefer the writings of Greenberg's brilliant and more versatile colleague, the late Harold Rosenberg, but no one will think that Rosenberg was as good an art critic as he was a social and literary critic. There may be more to talk about in Rosenberg's essay on "Time In The Museum" than in a Greenberg piece on, say, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture", but Greenberg always manages to say more about painting in a page than Rosenberg could in an essay. The contrast points up not relative merit but the fact, again, that the most talented critics tend not to want to write about art as art. They are interested—just as Greenberg argued time after time—in art as phenomenon, in art as social meaning, in art as anything but what it is for most of those who make it.

The difference between Rosenberg and Greenberg—though not as total in the end as both men claimed—may be summarized by isolating a few brief formulations. In these it will be seen that their respective approaches to twentieth-century art derived from theories of value which they did their best to apply consistently. Strangely, the two men usually agreed in what "was important, and both may be said to have found in Jackson Pollock an exemplary painter whose unpopularity with other artists and critics only proved how lacking in decent standards was the contemporary art world. Greenberg always claimed, more than Rosenberg, to know what was what, and it wasn't often that he allowed himself to be surprised by a new body of work or by the reception it had been given. All the same, he admitted now and again to changing his mind, and conceded that the artistic climate might well affect the way even he would look at a painting. Rosenberg's was the more mercurial temperament, and his best essays on art seem always to have a more speculative dimension, as if—in the absence of a firm belief in the value of individual paintings—he needed to discover both the source of their obvious energy and of his own peculiar interest in them. Greenberg, who resisted any note of boyish enthusiasm, was content to sound like a connoisseur, so that even his changes of mind seem to emerge from a stable basis of comparison and evaluation. Rosenberg, on the other hand, seemed not to be writing mainly for people who had given their lives to painting, but for those who, like him, had found in modern art a powerful expression of—and a way out of—the modern condition. Not surprisingly, Rosenberg is most impressive when he is talking about "the condition" of this thing or that; Greenberg is best on "internal" developments in the work of Picasso or Lipchitz or Chaim Soutine.

Rosenberg (on Pollock): "His consciousness is directed not toward an effect determined by notions of good painting but toward the protraction and intensification of the doing itself."

Greenberg: "To be categorically against [or for] a current artistic tendency . . . means inquiring into the motives of artists instead of into results."

Rosenberg (on American action painting): "The gesture on the canvas was a gesture of liberation from Value. . . . The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life. . . . If the picture is an act, it cannot be justified *as an act of genius* in a field whose whole measuring apparatus has been sent to the devil. Its value must be found apart from art."

Greenberg: "All values are human values, relative values, in art as well as elsewhere. Yet there does seem to have been more or less of a general agreement among the cultivated of mankind over the ages as to what is good art and what bad . . . this agreement rests, I believe, on a fairly constant distinction made between those values only to be found in art and the values which can be found elsewhere."

Because Greenberg insisted so often upon inevitably "values only to be found in art", he could seem narrow to readers who were less interested than he in formal properties or who had trouble seeing them even when Greenberg pointed them out. And of course to try to distinguish between achievement and failure at a time when, according to other intelligent witnesses, the "whole measuring apparatus has been sent to the devil" is to seem pretentious and, perhaps, dishonest. Greenberg's attempt to establish a theory of value and rigorously to evaluate works of art that had in some degree broken with earlier representational norms was, clearly, an admirable enterprise. It was tendentious, practice to breed suspicion, and as Greenberg grew more confident in his writings, he came more and more to invite fierce resistance. This is a pity, really, since it should be possible to agree with Greenberg's view of a particular work without having to reject him altogether. Even where—as in his less than respectful accounts of Rouault and Alexander Calder—he fails to persuade, he has instructive things to say, and it is intellectually satisfying to see the man explaining in general terms what must once have seemed to him a merely visceral or personal aversion.

To decide between Greenberg and Rosenberg, which is to say, between one theory of value and another, may seem necessary to someone who wishes to know where he stands on the art of the moment. But the battles fought by the great critics in the period between 1940 and 1970 have by now been settled, and one's position on the big issues must finally have much to do with one's actual response to paintings. I can say that Pollock was a painter of major importance without ceding Greenberg's view of specific canvases as "achieved and perfected works of art". I can reject Rosenberg's account of the "peculiar gracefulness" and "skill" in Pollock's late paintings without denying the radical challenge they posed to everything else that appeared in 1955. Greenberg may help me more than anyone else to cast a cold, intolerant eye on what currently passes for avant-garde invention in New York or London, but it is also the case that only a critic as intimately involved in the scene as Greenberg was thirty years ago may expect to shape our enthusiasms as he did. The approach to paintings as paintings remains a necessary model, an exemplary critical fiction, if you will. But new works continue to require fresh adjustments, and the older modernist or post-modernist works often seem only slightly less impenetrable than they seemed a generation ago. Whether or not you agree with Rosenberg that the value of individual paintings "must be found apart from art", you have to agree that it is not easy to decide which one of ten Pollock or Rothko paintings you ought to prefer.

Which brings us to the heart of the matter. If it is true—as I believe it is—that Greenberg taught a whole generation to see the connection between collage as practised by the great Cubist masters in 1913 and the emergence of abstraction in America after the Second World War; that he made the definitive case not only for the American painters of his generation but for Monet and other already "classic" painters we didn't quite know how to appreciate; and that he founded a rigorous aesthetic based on a ready tolerance for "errors of taste, false starts and over-run objectives"—why is it that he left us with so little confidence that each of us so educated would be able to do the job of evaluation for himself? Why is it that when Greenberg says of "Guernica" that it proves Picasso "could not make a success of a large canvas with Cubistically flattened forms", we register only slight surprise, and go on to murmur something about the irrelevance of disagreements over particular works? For shouldn't it be that people who share certain values, a common vocabulary, and a sense of historical progress or tradition should also be able to agree that "Guernica" is or is not a successful painting? And if we cannot, as many cannot, agree with Greenberg that Chagall's black-and-white etchings are far more successful than his paintings, or that Soutine succeeded as an artist only in spite of his expressive gifts, what is our critical education all about?

Donald B. Kuspit's *Clement Greenberg, Art Critic*, doesn't go so far as to ask that question. It does complain about the critic's refusal to countenance a phenomenological approach to painting, and argues that without such an approach the critic is forced to ignore "psychological effect, or more generally, the expressive aura of art". This aura, Kuspit goes on to say, "is the residue of intention", and no matter what Greenberg may claim, it is an important part of our experience of the painting. Greenberg's attempt to validate his taste and to establish for it a consensual basis seems to Kuspit a heroic enterprise, but he insists that it is possible to isolate works of art from their cultural moment and to look at them without attending also to their referential dimension. If we cannot find a generally acceptable way of looking at individual paintings, the reason may be that we insist too strenuously on a pure or narrow view of art as the object in itself. Kuspit offers no alternative, apart from his vague sense that we ought to make room for a "psychological" reading of the work. In practice, the alternatives have usually been embodied in an impressionistic criticism that is frankly personal and oriented to surfaces; in a historical criticism that defines and evaluates the work against the tradition in which it must be set; or in a literary criticism that humanizes the work by discovering or inventing a content that will be relevant to the ordinary concerns of ordinary men and women. Kuspit seems not to believe that these are the only alternatives, but provides no working model of his own. Though he tries, with considerable skill and intelligence, to set himself apart from Greenberg, he is on the whole reduced, to paraphrasing the master's views and seconding his conclusions. The problems remain very much what they seemed to those of us who have lived for years with Greenberg's essays as a bracing bedside companion.

The temptation, in addressing these problems, is to start at the beginning, but one soon concludes that this is useless. It may be interesting to know what Picasso was thinking when he tried his hand at landscape painting in the early 1950s, but his intentions are after all aesthetically significant only in the degree that they are manifestly inscribed in the works themselves. What we then choose to make of the paintings is another matter, and I have not the slightest doubt that many of the artists whom Greenberg writes about would have difficulty recognizing themselves in his account of their intentions. What did the sculptors Calder and Noguchi think of his statement that, in them, "'the *modern* is treated as a convention with a closed canon of forms', one of which, 'the emphasized contour', they use decoratively"? This is not, clearly, a descriptive statement pure and simple, but an implicit reading of intention. Suppose Noguchi denied that for him the *modern* was reducible to a particular look or decorative gimmick. Suppose he was supported in his denial by other reputable artists and critics. What would this prove? Greenberg is careful to say that the modern is *treated* in a given way by Noguchi, not that Noguchi thought to succeed as an artist by working things out in the way Greenberg describes. In any case, actual intention is not crucially at issue. What counts is the impression made, the way in which the object invites us to spend to it by working at it in style. To start at the beginning is to start with a first impression of the work.

That first impression, of course, will not count unless it is the impression of a person who can truly judge. When Greenberg wrote that "the best taste develops under the pressure of the best art and is the taste most subject to that pressure", he meant to exclude from the serious consideration of art the "urban masses" and the country "folk"—those, in other words, who will always "set up a pressure on society to provide them with a kind of culture fit for their own consumption". In no discernible way sensitive to the obvious charge of élitism often levelled at him, Greenberg has consistently argued that the attempt to make high art popular can only lead to the creation of kitsch, an art that "pretends to demand nothing of its customers". The genuine article, he contends, is usually hard to take, at least at first, and its effects will be felt only by those who have trained themselves to look for and to sustain the impression of irreconcilable tensions within the work. Kuspit, like Greenberg, sees these tensions as in part provided by the artist's ambivalent commitment to verisimilitude, which can take the form either of a straight representational impulse or of a desire to "imitate" or "express" his own emotional state.

Either way, the artist is almost bound to find his commitment an "obstacle to pictorial unity", which he will achieve, if at all, only as a "dialectical illusion". Gombrich's term, following Kant, suggests that the tension experienced by the viewer will be phenomenally real in a way that cannot be matched by his experience of pictorial unity. The viewer who is likely to have a fruitful first impression will need to keep these different kinds of experience apart and to resist the idea that, as he becomes more familiar with the work, there will cease to be division in his experience.

Nor is it the case, in Greenberg's view, that the tension and the different levels of experience he describes will be limited to one's encounters with twentieth-century painting. The history of Western art shows that the "dialectical fluctuation between abstraction and representation", as Kuspit has it, between design and expression, has been constant. Greenberg even describes a radically abstract or intellectual painter like Barnett Newman as keeping "within the tacit and evolving limits of the Western tradition of painting". This sense of the tradition Greenberg most often supports by showing how good painters always work with a sure sense—more even than instinct—of the "tacit and evolving limits".

Even the viewer operates, as it were, in these terms, so that our perceptual capacities are constantly conditioned by what we see and what we learn to admire. If, at a certain point, we find it hard to like Renoir, find that the necessary tensions to which we are alert have been unduly softened, the cause will lie in our evolving relation to, say, Matisse or the later Monet. For if we learn, in coming properly to appreciate them, that what matters in painting are "simplification, broadness, directness"—Greenberg's terms—then it may be that Renoir will suddenly seem too picturesque, too bent on the "sure-fire effect". This impression too will probably come to be modified under the pressure of other aesthetic experiences, including perhaps renewed encounters with paintings of an earlier age whose qualities had similarly to be retrieved from the impression produced by their more obvious effects.

Wherever we look, adjustments in our perceptual habits are required to keep pace with our experience of new works and with our changing conceptual grasp of the tensions to which all interesting works bear witness. The development of collage in 1912 may have produced "a more vivid *idea* of depth" than any previous painting had achieved, but the dynamics of the actual work, like the tensions produced in Cubist art generally, had still to be understood in "traditional" terms. Greenberg quotes, in his fine essay on collage (1959), a famous passage from E. H. Gombrich's *Art And Illusion*, in which the "dialectical illusion" is described as the relation between illusion and contradiction. I don't see how it is possible to improve upon the formulation:

> If illusion is due to the interaction of clues and the absence of contradictory evidence, the only way to fight its transforming influence is to make the clues contradict each other and to prevent a coherent image of reality from destroying the pattern in the plane. Unlike the Pantin-Latour, a still life by Braque . . . will marshal all the forces of perspective, texture, and shadow, not to work in harmony, but to clash in virtual deadlock . . . . [Cubism succeeds] by the introduction of contrary clues. 'Try as we may to see the guitar or the bottle suggested to us as a three-dimensional object . . . we will always come across a contradiction somewhere which compels us to start afresh.

Though the goal of the modernist work is to shift the balance of force from illusion to contradiction, the element of tension remains to distinguish the experience as an aesthetic experience. Gombrich's account of the revolution wrought by the Cubist masters in no way disputes Greenberg's sense of historical continuities, or the best answer to the charge that Greenberg is a historical determinist, that he is willing to see development only when he can account for it in terms of the already evolved tradition, is that he has read the tradition as he has read paintings always as if he were confronting those particular tensions for the first time

More difficult to answer is the charge that Greenberg has too decisively limited his discussions of modern art. When Kuspit challenges his "insistence on the logical priority of the medium to what it conveys", our impulse is to side with Greenberg, until we consider all that is entailed in the proposition. Does Greenberg's insistence on the material character of the work of art commit him to Valéry's view of art, in terms of which "the real connoisseur . . . is necessarily he to whom [the work] suggests nothing"? And if this is so, does it follow that people with the best taste will naturally—directed not by imposed cultural imperatives but by "common sense"—incline to consider the medium apart from anything it might suggest?

Consider a typical instance: The connoisseur is confronted with a painting by Rouault entitled "The Old King". What does he see? He recognizes a figure in profile. He registers the fact that the figure is rather block-like in its solidity and that, despite its several luminous colours, the painting achieves remarkable pictorial unity. This he attributes to Rouault's method of compartmenting his colours, encasing his shapes in heavy black borders which are clearly intended to call to mind Gothic stained-glass windows. The

viewer may not care to read in the old king's face the "mood of resignation and inner suffering" that means so much to textbook writers like H. W. Janson, but he will no doubt feel there is a heaviness in the figure that has at least to be considered as an aura. The painting has a mood. He may not like that mood, may feel that it excludes him in some way. But he will need to come to terms with it, to give it a name and assign it a purpose before deciding what to think of the painting.

Greenberg would say of the mood that it is inevitably a function of the "artistic personality" embodied in the work, and that a personality like Rouault's should inspire "distaste". The judgment, he would insist, is aesthetic, not personal, and is arrived at by attending to Rouault's handling of his medium. Yes, there are the obvious "interventions" of black or brown borders in Rouault's paintings, and yes, they call to mind stained-glass windows. But what is the use to which Rouault puts these things? The connoisseur will know, surely, that the "interventions . . . offer a safe way of guaranteeing the harmony of other colors". Rouault offers himself as an artistic original with a traditionalist religious orientation, but in fact he simply sought and found an easy way of unifying his surface. The bordering technique helped to articulate and "emphasize" the surface in a hopeful way, but Rouault only "seemed to be settling the conflict between pattern and illusion in favor of the immediate, sensuous effect of the former". Live with the paintings a while and you will see that "the unifying conception . . . remains oriented toward a standard illusion in depth, and the result, for all its ornamental accents, remains essentially conventional". Rouault's artistic personality is rejected because it "masks a conventional sensibility behind modernist effects". It is, in this sense, dishonest. The aesthetic distaste has what might be called a moral component, whatever Greenberg wishes to call it.

But let us return briefly to the question of the tension embodied in the work. Though he does not choose to dwell upon it, Greenberg's account of Rouault does clearly demonstrate that there is the requisite tension in his characteristic paintings. And it is, roughly, the tension between illusion and contradiction or design and expression elaborated earlier. Greenberg rejects the work not because the tension is resolved too entirely or too prematurely but because it is resolved in the wrong direction. The painting "remains oriented toward a standard illusion in depth". But what does it mean to say this? Not, surely, that any illusion in depth is by definition "standard", or that Rouault's image is drawn to appeal to an easy notion of mechanical skill or lifelikeness. If Greenberg wishes to speak for tension in the work of art, he must show that he is committed to the "dialectical fluctuation" rather than to an up-to-the-minute post-modernist resolution. This precisely is where the aesthetic falters. For what justification has Greenberg for saying that any version of the illusion in depth—no matter how original that version—will indicate "a conventional sensibility"? To my knowledge, no one ever claimed that Rouault drastically challenged our perceptual habits in the manner of a Picasso. But that is no reason to dismiss his efforts as dishonest or to pretend that the tensions implicit in his work have no valid expressive content. If his paintings show a genuine involvement in issues of design and pattern, he should at least be said to have been aware of problems to which others may have contributed more various and inventive solutions.

Greenberg's insistence on the priority of the medium doesn't prevent him from arguing, with Rouault as with others, that the artist's handling does finally have something to do with a content. "Rouault's manner", he complains, "seems to have a life independent of the subjects to which it is applied. We come away remembering paint instead of single pictures." Here it is necessary to object not to the fact that the critic rejects in Rouault what he praises in other—sheer painterly touch—but to the way in which he tries to "get" Rouault, as it were, coming and going. First he is accused of settling for standard illusions in depth, then of working for a pure manner complete with painterly refinements. The fact is, were Greenberg as ready as he claims to approach the work without a repertoire of limiting principles, he would find in Rouault a manner obviously geared to his subjects. If we do come away from "The Old King" "remembering *paint*" instead of the subject—an arguable proposition in any case—that is only because mood and medium are so deftly integrated that to think of the paint is to think of subject and necessary effect.

The protagonist of Lionel Trilling's story "The Other Margaret" who looks at the Rouault painting and notes that its "rude blacks . . . might seem barbarically untidy" doesn't feel that the manner is independent of the subject. His observation of the king's "fierce quality" doesn't prevent him from feeling that he is "human and tragic" or that the painting as a whole breathes an air of impersonality that lifts it beyond our capacity to identify too entirely with any aspect of it. Greenberg cares more than the Trilling character about Rouault's laying on of paint and he obviously knows more about the options available in a "conflict between pattern and illusion". But he is more ambivalent than he admits about content in painting, and his aesthetic principles often force him to be unfeeling towards paintings he has every reason to like better.

The weakness in his position is again pointed up in what Greenberg takes to be a conclusive contrast between Rouault and the modernist painters he prefers: Rouault, he argues, is "a narrow virtuoso who favors a certain kind of content mainly for the sake of style—unlike Matisse and Picasso and Mondrian, who work at a style in order to achieve content". A tricky business. What exactly is the content favoured by Rouault? Clearly, for Greenberg, it has something to do with the tragic solemnity we have noted in his figures.

This aura or suffusing emotion the critic rejects as in some sense insincere or vaguely wishful. It stems from a religious conviction, a "modern" Catholicism which when deliberately expressed in a modernist painting inevitably comes off as religiosity. When he writes that "Rouault's manner seems to have a life independent of the subjects to which it is applied" Greenberg means precisely that even the figure of the king who has no specific religious affiliation will seem to express the content of the painter's vague religious faith. And the style? "'Profundity'", says the critic, "is the term that gets associated with religiosity in these days." Rouault's is an unsatisfactory style because it lends itself to the impression of an obvious profundity. His content is shallow because it is manipulated in the end for the sake of a certain look. And a look, Greenberg has elsewhere written, is "an affair of standardized categories . . . within reach of uninspired calculation".

If we reject the critic's case against Rouault, we are yet compelled to agree that he has his reasons and that a certain scepticism about artists who inspire confident assertions on the quality of life in general is usually warranted. We may be less willing to agree that the great modernist painters work "to achieve content". A painting like "Guernica" Greenberg dismisses without making any mention of content. Hans Hoffman he praises for fertility of "vision" though he never once offers his version of the content of that vision. Matisse, Picasso, Mondrian? He says of the latter that he gives us "islands radiating clarity, harmony, and grandeur—passion mastered and cooled". Is this content, we wonder, intrinsically more acceptable than Rouault's? Kuspit argues that the high modernist aesthetic—which so clearly prefers Mondrian to Rouault, for example—is a partisan position: "It sets limits prematurely; it avoids confusion, but its clarity blinds us". Mondrian, I should say, whatever his originality and his radical capacity to work out the terms of his enterprise, is a prime example and mover of this modernist bias. He is, no doubt, a more important artist than Rouault. But are his paintings better paintings? Is their content more sincere? Have they a greater power to move and affect us? Do we remember single pictures by Mondrian more clearly than we remember "The Old King"? For Greenberg, as Kuspit shows, Western art has now triumphantly entered its "positivist phase", which is to say, it "is now explicit—abstraction is the form this openness takes—about what had always been implicit in it".

A mature art, by this token, always knows what it is about. Its content is not stated in the work but is inferred by a viewer who is in touch with its underlying objectives. It does not contain its reflected effect but gives oblique access to that effect. Thus it is that an art like Rouault's must be rejected. In its attempt to suggest a content by predigesting for the viewer its central objectives, it operates too comfortably like an earlier Western art that concealed its material character in its overt commitment to representation and illusion. The content of a Mondrian or a Matisse doesn't have to be underlined because the quality of the invention is self-evident. How do you know it is self-evident? You know. And the content? "You know that a work of art has content because of its effect." You cannot compare the effect of a Rouault to that of a Mondrian unless you misconceive entirely what is meant by effect. The one does not so much achieve as deliver over an effect that it has received; the other moves us because its content is so entirely a function of the attention it pays to its own material composition.

Obviously, those who have learnt—at whatever cost—to prefer Mondrian to Rouault and who experience that preference as a visceral attraction and revulsion will hope to find in Greenberg an adequate support. But no matter how thorough Greenberg may be in substantiating this claim or that, he remains ultimately elusive just where one expects him to be definitive. His feeling for painters li Pollock or for the sculptor Da Smith is consistently mounted an appreciation of those who k how to "accept the surprises [their] temperament", who pu an art "beyond accomplishedne facility or taste". Always an op nent of "the safe way", he ce brates in Renoir the "fading the desire to please", in M the point at which "he stop correcting himself and became dash". To many of these favo artists it is possible to gran highest compliment: that they pose the greatest possible org unity upon the greatest divers But if "economy" is a neces element of organic unity, as Gr berg also supposes, then it is h to see how Pollock rates. And "the greatest diversity" has to with anything beyond originary, expressive intention, it should hard to make the case for Mondri or Barnet Newman.

Even the case for the gre Cubist masters may seem confus when Greenberg speaks of the "encasement in a style that, so t speak, feels for the painter a relieves him of the anguish a awkwardness of invention, leaving his gift free to function almost au matically". I cannot help feeling that the same insight, derived fro an encounter with another kind of painter encased in a different style, would take on a negative valuation and lead Greenberg to dismiss the painter. For to say that a style feels for a painter is after all to say that he does not feel for himself. And a gift that may be said to function "almost automatically" may not be said to actively risk the "false starts" and "errors of taste" that come with a more temperamental approach to painting. I conclude, with Kuspit, that Greenberg's aesthetic is deficient, his attempt "to articulate . . . the premises of his own sensibility" only a partial success. If he is the greatest critic of twentieth-century art we have had, he has shown that neither the best taste nor the best intelligence can fully compensate for the absence of a traditional, consensually va dated hierarchy of aesthetic values

Camden Town and Bloomsbury

By Frances Spalding

SIMON WATNEY :
English Post-Impressionism
151pp. Studio Vista. £10.
0 289 70888 5

The first decade of this century presents a low point in the history of English art. No young, avant-garde movement pushed forward to challenge the supremacy of the late Victorians who still held sway, modifying their art to suit Edwardian taste. Mawkish sentiment and a modish display of elegance prevailed. Even the secessionist New English Art Club moved up-market to become a nursery for the Academy, with its paintings of august sites, neglected roses, discovered shepherdesses, the pleasing and the picturesque. Modernity at the Royal Academy meant the appearance in one painting of the motor car, its headlights discovering nymphs disporting in a glade. All Sargent's bravura could not disguise the decade's lack of innovation and ideas. While certain mature artists, such as Wilson Steer, confronted this loss of direction with an attempt to renovate past styles, a younger generation despaired. By 1909, as Vanessa Bell recalled, certain of her contemporaries felt they had "lost their way".

For many, the antidote was French Post-Impressionism, though the swing away from Victorianism had begun in art before Roger Fry's two Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1910 and 1912. But after the first of these famous shows, the decorative emphasis in English art became more pronounced; naturalism, skill and finish were exchanged for pure colour, daring experimentation and expressive design.

Simon Watney pursues English Post-Impressionism cleverly but not very far. Unlike the organizers of the recent Royal Academy exhibition, he does not gather under the Post-Impressionist umbrella a host of almost unrelated minor painters. Though he claims to present a body of work previously overlooked, his choice of artists is familiar to us through previous publications and exhibitions. He settles simply for a marriage of Camden Town with Bloomsbury and simultaneously berates art historians for failing to engage in full historical accounts. We must yet await a book that does for English Post-Impressionism what John Rewald did for its French counterpart, the charting of cross-currents between individuals and groups during an exceptionally fertile period. Such a book would attend to more artists than are here mentioned, in particular to those associated with Vorticism; it would also assess the contributive influence of the Scottish Colourists and would give more than a passing reference to the naive landscapes of John, Innes, Lees and Bayes. The French influence was not easy to assimilate and counter reactions (particularly in the work of Gertler) should surely contribute to the picture of the period as a whole.

Bold and forthright, Simon Watney slams formalism and upholds the importance of subject matter. In this respect his interpretation of Camden Town painting surpasses Wendy Baron's in her recent book on the subject. The two books are in fact complementary. Watney slides over the complicated manoeuvrings that secured the group's formation, which Baron investigates in detail. But where Baron, for the sake of exact chronology, excludes biographical side-issues, Watney uses them to further his evolution. Harold Gilman's dogged search after pictorial truth is related to his moral rectitude, parsonic background and voice. We are shown how Van Gogh's reproductions, Gilman's touchstone, encouraged a closer relationship between the painter and his subject. Sickert's nudes lie buried beneath a welter of highlights, but Gilman's, as Watney observes, turn and confront the spectator. Subject is important, but we are still very far from expressionism, and Roger Fry's discovery of an "objective spirit" in Gilman's and Gore's art is not, as Watney claims it is, an "extraordinarily inaccurate criticism".

Ironically the book reaches its climax when subject matter peters out. The chapter on Bloomsbury abstraction is both authoritative and perceptively sympathetic, one's only criticism being that the footnote on Grant's "Abstract Kinetic Scroll" contains information too important to be left out of the main text. Vanessa Bell's brief abstract phase fulfils the prophecy of her earlier work as Watney demonstrates. Roger Fry, however, the third Bloomsbury painter, receives too little consideration. The first to have a one-man show of Post-Impressionist work, his youthful rush into the new style deserves more attention than it is given.

Fry is also accused of misunderstanding Grant, of failing to appreciate his inventive fantasy or his passionately serious attitude to decoration. Precisely the opposite is true. In his short book on Grant published by the Hogarth Press in 1924, Fry praised Grant's poetic invention, comparing his "playful fantastic element" to conceits in Elizabethan poetry, and he argued at length that Grant's rhythmic and colour sense made him particularly suited to decorative work.

Throughout the book the author attacks the hold of formalist criticism on art history. He lays the blame on the original debates surrounding Post-Impressionism and makes his chief victim Roger Fry. Extracting quotations from *Vision and Design*, he oversimplifies Fry's thought in order to construct his own theoretic edifice. The problem here is two-fold: because Fry's aesthetic underwent constant revision *Vision and Design* only represents one part of his career; secondly, Watney, in pursuit of his own theories, leap-frogs vigorously. He argues that post-1945 art history, with its emphasis on movements, one following the next in a linear, evolutionary development, and its corresponding tendency to ignore artists and styles that do not fit this pattern, is largely the fault of Roger Fry's concept of Post-Impressionism. No mention is made of Wölfflin's contribution to this art-historical model (canonized by Greenberg): Fry's taste alone, Watney argues, "has unmistakably shaped our notions of the history of art as a whole in this long period, ensuring a critical focus upon the kind of painting he preferred".

If this claim is correct then Degas, Dürer, the German Expressionists and the Surrealists (all artists whom Fry either ignored or disliked) would not now receive such universal approbation. To support this gross exaggeration Watney argues that Fry undervalued the social relevance of art to stress its purity and, in so doing raised it to an aristocratic position.

It would be foolish to argue that a man who denied the emotive difference between a saucepan and a crucifixion cared greatly for subject matter: but Fry never ignored the social relevance of art. Acutely aware of art's need to come to terms with society, he loathed the falsified, conventionalized terms—the fashionable portrait, the sentimental story-picture, the exaggerated pursuit of all that is aesthetically insignificant. He deplored the use of art as symbolic currency for social prestige. And in his writings, his style and terminology make clear his desire to share aesthetic enjoyment. His desire to proselytize confirms his agreement with Morris's statement: "What business have we with art at all unless all can share it?"

Like Fry, Simon Watney is able to share his enjoyment in the art discussed with his readers. The price of the book, however, is less than democratic. Nor is it justified by the many reproductions which are often severely cropped and occasionally printed back to front. The text suffers from more than usual minor inaccuracies and from the irritating decision to spell Cézanne throughout without an accent. The style is bright and racy and considerable use is made of a well-rounded phraseology of abuse. With its close attention to technique and considered analyses it makes a fresh and provocative contribution to our understanding of an often undervalued period of English art.

National Trust Studies 1981, edited by Gervase Jackson-Stops, will be published next Monday, October 27 (160pp. Sotheby Parke Bernet. £12.50. 0 85667 110 X). Among the fifteen articles are two on the great Victorian house of Cragside in Northumberland, designed by Norman Shaw: "Paintings from the De Morgan Foundation at Cragside", by Theodore Crombie, and "Swan's Electric Light at Cragside", by Robert S. Taylor.

Considering the whole continuum

By H. C. Robbins Landon

GERALD ABRAHAM :
The Concise Oxford History of Music
968pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
0 19 311319 8

Nearly forty years ago (1941), Paul Henry Lang published a huge book entitled *Music in Western Civilization*. It was very successful and went through many editions, but it is in the nature of such vast surveys that they go out of date, and even out of fashion, so that one is only mildly surprised to find it not even mentioned anywhere in Gerald Abraham's *The Concise Oxford History of Music*. Nowadays, one's first reaction to such a survey is: it can't be done by one man. Professor Abraham explains with characteristic modesty in his preface, however, that such an undertaking "might still be useful to the intelligent layman and non-specialist. It might even perhaps be useful to a specialist who, finding himself 'knowing more and more about less and less', might wish to stand back and consider the whole continuum of musical history". I might be considered a typical example of a man so described, and let me state at once that I found this book thoughtful, immensely stimulating, urbane and put together with skill and wit. Of course, it was to be expected that Professor Abraham would write knowledgeably and enthusiastically about nineteenth-century *Kleinmeister*, a subject on which he is an acknowledged expert: his paragraph about the *Messe solennelle* in D minor by Cherubini is as fair a summary as one could wish for. But that which, in my opinion, makes this book outstanding is the excellence with which Professor Abraham is able to describe, often in one or two sentences, the great developments in the history of music, and to make them come alive. Here is what he has to say on the subject of Gluck's *Orfeo*:

> This libretto was revolutionary; the music with which Gluck clothed it was not. He writes *recitativi accompagnati* on the lines Jommelli and Traetta were following at the same time and although he innovates by supporting *secco* recitative with string chords instead of keyboard continuo the nature of the recitative itself is unchanged. The organization of e g the opening of Act I as a complex of chorus and recitative followed by strophic song alternating with recitative, and the entire scene in Hades, derives from Rameau. So does the extensive employment of ballet and chorus. What stamps *Orfeo* as a work of genius is the skill with which Gluck welds together elements of *opera seria* and *tragédie lyrique* so that no one notices their disparity, the dramatic power of the first two acts, and such imaginings as the exquisite "Che puro ciel" in which the finesse of the orchestration surpasses anything of its kind that had preceded it.

On the subject of C. H. Graun's *Der Tod Jesu* (Berlin, 1756), we read: "This was a setting—less bad than is often asserted, less good than more than a century of popularity in Prussia suggests—of a poem by K. W. Ramler, 'the poetic drill-sergeant of his age'. The best music is in the sturdy, if square-cut, choruses ('Sein Odem ist schwach', 'Hier liegen wir'), the worst in the flaccid solo-writing [musical example] and the dull harmonization of the hymns, a foretaste of the Lutheran hymn-style of the later Enlightenment."

As two final examples, we may quote from the extraordinary summaries of two works about which, one would think, there is nothing more to be said—Handel's *Messiah* and Verdi's *Otello*:

> Yet such is the splendour of the music with which Handel clothed all this [inspired patchwork of a libretto] that the strange basis is forgotten, if noticed at all. He never surpassed the beauty or power of the solos, though he sometimes equalled them, and the choral thunderbolts—"Wonderful! Counsellor" in "For unto us", "He is the King of Glory" in "Lift up your heads", "for the Lord God" in "Hallelujah" (and the fugal entry "And he shall reign" is no less shattering in a different way)—are the most Jovian that even he ever hurled.
>
> The great master of them all remained silent after *Aida*. And then in 1887 he broke his silence with one of the greatest masterpieces of all opera, an *Otello* for which Boito adapted, often actually translated, Shakespeare with extraordinary felicity, and Verdi translated Shakespeare's poetry and characters into music of supreme genius. The Verdi of *Otello* was not a "new" Verdi but the old one almost trans-figured; the old power without the old vulgarity—so that a patch of full-throated melody like Desdemona's "E un dì sul mio sorriso", in the finale of Act III, causes a passing shock. There is nothing Wagnerian, though there are hardly any set-numbers—and they, the *brindisi* in Act I, the choral serenade to Desdemona in Act II, her "willow" song, are always dramatically justified. There are no *Leitmotive* yet the reminiscence, at the very end, of "Un bacio . . . ancora un bacio" from the wonderful love-duet in Act I is the most poignant stroke in all Verdi. The balance between voice and orchestra is superbly handled, the orchestra always alive and producing the profoundest effects with the utmost economy; the unaccompanied cor anglais anticipating the willow song before the curtain goes up on Act IV prepares a mood of intense melancholy, and the open fifths of the two clarinets in their lowest register fall like a stone on the heart.

In my opinion, prose of this kind—rare enough in books about music nowadays—ranks among the best things ever written about music; and the book is full of similar felicities.

Another point that deserves praise is the choice of musical examples, which are usually of lesser-known works and thus of special interest to the professional musician. The illustrations are also interesting and well chosen. And Professor Abraham enlivens this enormous book with touches of humour: "The title part of *Tancredi* was sung by a castrato; Rossini regretted the dying out of what one can hardly call the breed."

Naturally, there are omissions that one might regret, for instance about the origins of the pianoforte: if we are going to have a remark (page 761) about the piano being "vastly improved in sensitivity by Sébastian Erard's double-escapement action (1823)", then it seems to me that one ought to mention the piano's great inventor, Bartolommeo di Francesco Cristofori, one of whose pianos, signed and dated Florence 1720, is in perfectly restored condition in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It was right for Professor Abraham (page 242) to draw attention to the composer John Shephard, "a turbulent and eccentric figure too little of whose music has been printed", but one regrets the total omission of equally eccentric and more important composers such as Franz Beck (the most talented of the second-generation Mannheim school and an almost exact contemporary of Haydn) and Joseph Martin Kraus (1756-92), whose Symphony in C minor is one of the late eighteenth century's finest. And it seems odd, while on the subject of omissions, to have forgotten the Australian composer, Alfred Hill, who died at the age of ninety in 1960 and wrote some very interesting and locally very influential works such as *The Sea*.

There are small slips, but it seems entirely gratuitous to list them: they are not important and may be easily corrected (the dating of Haydn's Masses on page 551, the origin of the title of Mozart's Coronation Mass—it was given during the coronation ceremonies at Prague in 1790—on page 553, and so on). What must be said, however, is that the bibliography, assembled by various hands, is wildly eccentric in its choices, or rather omissions. How can one leave out Charles Rosen's fundamental book, *The Classical Style*?

I am sorry to see that, in a university press book, we are now being given "climax" as a verb (not in my *OED*, fourth edition), "virtuosic", "through-composed" and "duetting" as a verb. I suppose I ought to say, "hopefully" they will disappear again.

Rebreaking new ground

By Derrick Puffett

DONALD MITCHELL :
Gustav Mahler
The Early Years
Revised and Edited by Paul Banks and David Matthews
338pp. Faber. £12.95.
0 571 11224 2

DERYCK COOKE :
Gustav Mahler
An Introduction to his Music
127pp. Faber. £4.95 (paperback, £2.50).
0 571 10030 9

Twenty years after the 1960 centenary celebrations, the "Mahler industry" shows no sign of flagging: on the contrary, it has reached the stage where its first products have acquired historic status of their own, and are being reissued like old recordings. Donald Mitchell's book originally appeared in 1958 (and was reviewed in the *TLS* of October 24 for that year). The blurb's claim that it "set an entirely new standard in Mahler documentation and research" is justified: the first volume in what now appears to be a four-volume study, it initiated multi-volume works by Henri-Louis de La Grange and Constantin Floros but is superseded by neither. One further volume of Mitchell's work has so far appeared, *The Wunderhorn Years* (1976). Although aspects of it may be regretted—with its uncontrolled piling up of detail, it is an extraordinarily poorly organized book—both it and *The Early Years* are indispensable to the Mahler student.

The present book reprints the original text almost unchanged, with an appendix compiled by the two editors. The aim of the appendix is to bring the book up to date, making corrections and additions with as little disturbance to the main text as possible. This aim is achieved, but at a cost. The appendix is presented in the form of notes—notes to the original footnotes as well as to the main text—so that when reading the book one has to keep it open at four places, namely one's place in the text, the corresponding place in the notes and the *two* corresponding places (notes to text and notes to notes) in the appendix. References to the appendix are indicated by means of little arrows, like traffic signs, in the margin. As one thumbs back and forth, trying not to get lost, a familiar sense of vertigo descends and one longs nostalgically for the headier complications of *The Wunderhorn Years*.

The contents of the appendix are hardly earth-shattering. There are six pages on Mahler's contrapuntal studies at the Vienna Conservatoire, and two of his student essays are printed in full. (One of these deals with "The Influence of the Orient on German Literature": surprisingly one is spared editorial references to the *Song of the Earth*.) On page 199 the editors speculate whether Mahler wheeled the infant Mizzi Zwerenz in a pram or a push-chair. There is a good deal more of this. Nevertheless, among all the trivia many issues are clarified. It is only when one gets to the "new" list of works, correcting but also duplicating much of the "old" list (printed 200 pages earlier), that one sees that much of this material should have gone into the main text. A complete overhauling would have been better than all this tinkering.

On the content of the main text it is almost superfluous to comment. Mitchell's biographical thoroughness, his scrupulousness with references and his way of elucidating the various versions of a work are well known and widely admired. The only musical judgment I would query is his insistence that the main Wagnerian influence in the cantata *Das klagende Lied* is early Wagner, not the Wagner of the *Ring*. This was a good point, well worth making in 1958, but I wonder if Mitchell was not slightly overstating his case. One scene in the *Ring* is absolutely crucial to the cantata; the scene in *Götterdämmerung* where Gunther introduces his bride to the assembled vassals, only to be revealed as a cuckold. The combination of C major festivity with jealousy, murder and revenge is obviously vital to the Mahler: the borrowing crystallizes in the "ominous" diminished seventh chord, mentioned by Mitchell on page 190, which appears in both scores (just as the E flat minor triad quoted on page 181 acknowledges the opening of Wagner's opera). Mitchell himself shows that *Götterdämmerung* made a strong impression on Mahler in 1879, the year before he composed the cantata.

Deryck Cooke's book, posthumously published, is a revised and expanded version of his 1960 booklet, prepared for publication by Colin and David Matthews. It consists of a general essay, programme notes on the works, and the texts of all Mahler's vocal settings together with translations. As regards the essay it is impossible to disagree with a word; Cooke is particularly good on what he calls the "Whole Truth" of Mahler's music, that quality of inclusiveness which makes it intolerable to some and indispensable to others. The programme notes are frankly descriptive, and include comments such as: "Scarcely credible—yet Mahler was a quite incredible human being". But here again there is nothing with which one could disagree.

Even so, one thinks of Cooke's masterly edition of the Tenth Symphony: if only he had been able to convey in words, as well as in notes, the insight into Mahler he undoubtedly possessed. A reference to "the opening theme of the scherzo of the Faith, with its twelve-bar contraction of an implied sixteen-bar theme", reveals a *depth* of understanding and a sympathy to analysis which one would never otherwise guess from this book. Was it the format that constrained him? If he had had the space, what a book he might have written—*if* he had not been too busy preparing the score of the Tenth, writing his book on the *Ring*, etc. As it is, we have only a short, introductory guide. But as such it could hardly be bettered.

Recording the rise

By Keith Walker

NATALIE BAUER-LECHNER :
Recollections of Gustav Mahler
Translated by Dika Newlin
Edited and annotated by Peter R. Franklin
250pp. Faber. £8.95.
0 571 10025 2

NORMAN DEL MAR :
Mahler's Sixth Symphony—A Study
153pp. Eulenburg Books. £7.75.
0 903873 29 X

A professional viola player, and a determined and cultivated woman, Natalie Bauer-Lechner met Mahler at the Vienna Conservatory. They became close friends some time later, in the 1890s, after her marriage had broken down. Natalie seems to have been an ardent, even passionate admirer, following the rise in Mahler's reputation as conductor and composer, making copies of his music, and spending lakeside summers with Mahler and his sister. (Mahler composed. Natalie practised her viola and busied away the too noisy peasants or holiday-makers.)

There is evidence that Mahler found her devotion overbearing. He once wrote, "I cannot stand her constant mothering, advising, inspecting and spying". Their friendship was terminated, abruptly, it seems, by Alma Mahler who wrote in her *Memoir* that Mahler's "friends could not ever be friends of mine". Natalie did not remarry, and died in poverty in 1921. Two years later *Erinnerungen an Gustav Mahler* was published in Germany being edited from diaries, sketches, and parts prepared by Natalie herself.

We have reason to be grateful for Natalie's "inspecting and spying" for this book is a prime biographical source for Mahler's activities as a composer during the 1890s, when he wrote the first four symphonies. As well as this, it adds to our knowledge of Mahler's career as a conductor, and paints an affectionate and wholly believable portrait of a formidable eccentric. Mahler realized why the talented von Bülow was unsatisfactory as a conductor only when Frau von Bülow confirmed that her husband had no feeling for Nature. Arriving at a station just before the train was due to leave he leapt into a compartment (doors didn't exist for Mahler) and sat musing for half an hour in a carriage that happened to be disconnected. At a café, he rinsed his glass and absentmindedly poured the water over some women sitting on a terrace below. Shrieks, apologies and embarrassed laughter. Then it happened *again*. . . .

The essential material found here, however, is well known from biographies of Mahler, of which there are now many, and I wonder why the publishers have chosen this moment to release a translation bedecked with scholarly notes (and notes on notes), all in the best modern manner removed as far as possible from the text to which they refer, a translation moreover which must surely be superseded when H.-L. de la Grange releases the original manuscript.

Natalie records long commentaries by Mahler on his music which tend towards the impressionistic, such as "in this piece it is as if Nature herself were pulling faces and putting out her tongue", or "like the moment of awakening after a confused dream or rather a gentle return to consciousness of one's own reality—there now follows the Adagio". In his close and meticulous study of the sixth symphony Norman Del Mar inhabits a different, and altogether more accessible world of discourse. Wonderfully rich, the sixth is also Mahler's most concentrated and compact symphony. Everything grows out of a handful of thematic ideas, and the resulting whole is so homogeneous that Mahler can incorporate tunes from Schumann's *Manfred* and (of all things) Liszt's first piano concerto without the listener being conscious of the intrusion of alien material.

Del Mar's study consists of four chapters: a lucid "placing" of the symphony in Mahler's work as a whole, a thematic analysis, a discussion of the form, and (by far the longest chapter) a page by page commentary on the revisions. Mahler revised all his symphonies extensively, but none so much as this one. Del Mar shows that Mahler's detailed changes, based on hearing the work in rehearsal, are almost all improvements, although I am not as sure as Del Mar is that the largest change, moving the Andante so that it comes before the Scherzo, is so obviously right.

Modern Musical Scholarship, a book "for all lovers of music who seek to understand the historical context in which music was composed and how it developed through the ages", will be published next week (256pp. Oriel Press. £16. 0 85362 169 1). Edited by Edward Olleson, it collects papers delivered at the 1977 Oxford International Symposium devoted to "Modern Musicology and the Historical Tradition of Musical Scholarship". Among the papers are the following: "The Profession of Musical Scholarship", by Denis Arnold; "G. B. Doni, Musicological Activist, and his 'Lyra Barberina'", by Claude V. Palisca; "Analytical Thinking in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", by Ian Bent; "The Purposes and Desirable Characteristics of Text-Critical Editions", by Arthur Mendel; "The Emergence of the In Nomine: Some Notes and Queries on the Work of Tudor Church Musicians", by Paul Doe; "Trecento Angels and the Instruments they Play", by Howard Mayer Brown; "Faburden—New Sources, New Evidence: a Preliminary Survey", by Brian Trowell; and "A French Critic's View on the State of Music in London (1829)", by Vincent Duckles.

The string section

By John Keegan

E. G. HEATH :
Archery
A Military History
224pp. Osprey. £7.95.
0 85045 353 4

Archery has come down in the world. Time was, as Kipling reminds us in his tart little tale of Commissioner Barr-Saggot's bungled plan to win a beautiful bride at the Simla Toxophilite Society, when the sport "was as great a past as lawn-tennis is today. People talked as learnedly about 'holding' and 'loosing', 'stêles' and 'reflexed bows' . . . as we talk about 'volleys', 'rallies', 'smashes' and 'retiens'. And very pretty lady bowmen made the sport look, too, with a quiver twit clinched to take in an extra inch of corseted waist and a crinoline cut to show more ankle than a dashing girl could decently get away with in the drawing room.

Victorian archery went with close-mown lawns, cucumber sandwiches under the cedar trees and expensive prizes for success at the butts: if not always diamond bracelets of the sort with which Barr-Saggot tried to buy Kitty Boighton, then quite commonly silver arrows or a gilt Robin Hood bugle designed to set off a gentleman's well-cut shooting coat of Lincoln green. It is all an age away, if only a century in time, from the modern archer's baseball caps, anorak jackets and embroidered souvenir patches. And if one's aesthetic sense is not offended by archers' clothing today, it cannot fail to be affronted by the equipment they use, awful lopsided contrivances of steel and plastic, to which the perfect symmetry of the long bow, so close in trace to Hogarth's Line of Beauty, is a standing reproof.

But would the real archers of the past have turned up their noses as automatically as the modern traditionalist at the weapons current technology has put into their descendants' hands? The Royal Toxophilite Society, the Bowmen of Arden and the Royal Company of Archers—the latter not merely the Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland but the inner wheel of the national establishment—may enjoy keeping the Eglinton Tournament tradition alive. But the plastic and steel brigade are actually interested in striking gold. And there is no doubt that their contraptions drive an arrow truer than the yew-wood stave of Sherwood Forest ever did, and carry it further into the bargain. Range and accuracy, together with rapidity of discharge and ease of bending, are the chief qualities with which bowyers have sought to improve their product ever since the bow began to be made. And it is an easy guess, therefore, with which side of the surviving sport the archers of old would choose to team up.

Survival it is, rather than continuation. For nothing, or nothing significant, hangs on skill with a bow today. Twenty-five or fifty thousand years ago—archaeologists differ over the dating of the stone arrow heads which are the earliest clues to the bow's use—such skill counted for a very great deal indeed, if not yet in warfare, a human activity perhaps still to be invented, then in the struggle of hunting man for survival. So great an improvement was the bow over the unaided arm as a means of launching a missile at a moving target that there is no region of the world, with the exception of Australia, where traces of the bow or eye-witness records of its use are not found. Whether it was spontaneously invented in each continent or whether examples were carried from one to another we cannot now tell. Its universality is testimony to the genuine technological revolution its development represented.

Bowyers recognize, however, two main streams of their art, one western, one eastern, which barely overlap. The western "self" bow, made of a single piece of wood, represents the original tradition and, though it was to achieve a remarkable military renaissance in the later Middle Ages, a lower level of technical and practical achievement. The eastern bow is known as "composite". Though it has many forms, it consists in essence of a number of substances fixed together in such a way that their qualities work against each other. The "belly" of the bow, nearest the archer, was made of horn, which when released from compression returns forcibly to its natural shape; the "back" of the bow of sinew, which is elastic. Such a bow regains the position of rest faster than any self bow can; it may be made shorter for the same power and, because it curves sharply, fires a longer and therefore more deadly arrow. It also lends itself to use from horseback. Its disadvantages are that it requires even greater strength and dexterity to manage than the self bow. But, in the pastoral societies which used it, and whose livestock yielded the materials from which it was made, time naturally hung heavy on the herdsmen's hands, which turned readily to archery practice. The resulting skill displayed by Mongol and Turkish women never failed to awe those Westerners who witnessed it, and even more those who were subjected to its effects in the field.

The composite bow is first identified about 2300 BC on a Sumerian victory stele, when it had clearly already become a military weapon. It was familiar to the Romans (particularly in their wars with the Parthians) to the Byzantines and to the Crusaders. Western visitors to China and Japan from the seventeenth century onwards also encountered it and were able to envisage from the shows of skill mounted by Bannermen or Samurai the terror the Mongol arrow volleys struck into Christian hearts when their great cavalcades swept into Europe. It continued to give the Ottomans an important advantage in Mediterranean warfare until the sixteenth century, particularly in engagements at sea, and was not properly matched until the cross-bow was taken into general use by Christian warriors at the end of the middle ages. Even then it continued to be judged superior in rate of fire and range, if not penetration, and survived to be used at the last siege of Vienna in 1683.

Yet it cannot be regarded as a decisive weapon in the way that, for a short time, the long self bow became. The superiority of archery armies, like those of Genghis Khan, lay rather in their extraordinary mobility and total ruthlessness than in their armament, and was exaggerated by the political disunity of their enemies. In a straight fight between an archery army and a determined array of Western men-at-arms, as at Arsuf in 1191, the archery exchanges served as little more than preliminaries. When the real clash of armour came, even the redoubtable Saladin's cavalry gave before the armoured charge, which their supporting archers were quite unable to break up. And the eventual overthrow of the crusading states was the result of a critical decline in military manpower, not of a sudden accretion of technical superiority to the other side.

Why then the remarkable run of "longbow" victories in the wars of the later Middle Ages, between the Scots and the English and the English and the French? The answer seems to lie in the precautions the archers took to protect their positions before the battles began, with fences of stakes or belts of pot-holes, which prevented the enemy cavalry from charging home into their ranks. The social scorn felt by the horsemen for the lowly foot nevertheless drove them to make the effort and thereby they brought about their own destruction. But the reign of the long bowmen was to be short. Skill in the weapon's use was directly related to economic backwardness—the same was true of the composite bow—and, with the increasing prosperity of the British Isles from the sixteenth century onwards, archery rise at the butts dwindled into an insignificant minority.

E. G. Heath has already written much about the weapon to which he remains devoted. But this is his first study, and one of the few by any author, of the bow as an instrument of military power. In a compact span it is remarkably comprehensive and convincingly relates the technology of the bow to the strategies and tactics of the warfare of the past. If the reader could wish for more, it would be in the discussion of the reasons for the bow's displacement almost overnight by the firearm in the sixteenth century. Objectively judged, the latter was inferior to the former as a lethal agent and remained so for nearly a century. Admittedly the bow was a more demanding weapon; but the real reason for its disappearance, one may guess, was that the gun had overpowering smell of the future about it. Perhaps that is why the long bow appealed to strength of Victorian romantics and why they wish seek to plasticize it today it is so odd.

The brass in action

By Antony Brett-James

JOHN COLVILLE :
The Portrait of a General
A Chronicle of the Napoleonic Wars
246pp. Michael Russell. £6.95.
0 85955 076 1

Seldom a year goes by without the appearance of a diary or a clutch of letters written during the Peninsular War and the Waterloo campaign—that struggle which exerts a perennial fascination for the British. For one thing, many of today's regiments carry proud battle honours from this period. For another, the war was, for all its setbacks, retreats, and victories won at appalling cost in human life and suffering, a success. With few exceptions, the generals were men of courage, who led from the front. They were resolute in action, colourful in character, and very human. As for Wellington, their "Supreme", he was a very great soldier, of whom fresh glimpses are always welcome.

In *The Portrait of a General*, Sir John Colville has composed a skilful, elegant, succinct biography of his ancestor, General Sir Charles Colville. He has based his account upon Colville's numerous and hitherto unpublished letters. He also quotes some letters from his brother, John, Captain Lord Colville of Culross, RN, who commanded a man-of-war on convoy duty or cruising in the Channel; from colonels who wrote to their former brigade commander; from a Dr Collier about the treatment of the wounded after Waterloo; and from Colville's nephew, whom he took back to the Peninsula with him at the end of 1812 and who wrote excellent accounts of what he saw and experienced, sometimes giving a clearer impression of what it was like to be a general than his uncle does.

Inevitably those who write home from a war often take for granted the very details that readers more than a century and a half later are eager to find. So it is that Sir Charles, who commanded a brigade in Picton's 3rd Division, provides tantalizing vignettes of Picton "beset by all the ladies" in Oporto, but not enough about his "family" of staff officers, the arrangements at his headquarters, the table he kept, his favourite topics of conversation, and much else beside.

Colville also affords us details of Wellington, not only on campaign but also in Paris, entertaining Blücher at Vary's restaurant after Waterloo. It is left to Miss Catherine Mure, Colville's sister-in-law after his marriage in 1818, to pen the best portrait of the Duke in this book: "He is fair, eyes a fine greyish blue: this does not sound fine, but they are so animated and keen. They quite look through you and are the beauty of his face."

Other matters on which Charles Colville's letters throw light include the changing attitudes of local people when Wellington's army entered southern France; the lack of hurry or marital preparation or good intelligence in May 1815, despite rumours about Napoleon's movements; the court of King Louis XVIII, whom he visited in Ghent; the way in which his British soldiers fed hundreds of Portuguese poor and refugees in 1811; and the hostility which prevailed in Paris against the British Army after Waterloo.

Charles Colville was the son of a veteran of Culloden and Fontenoy. As a boy of fifteen he himself stayed with an aristocratic cavalry officer in France in order to learn the language, and at Versailles in 1785 he danced in a quadrille with Marie Antoinette. With the 13th Regiment of Foot he served in the West Indies, where one of his brothers died of yellow fever, and in Ireland in 1798; he accompanied Abercromby's expedition to Egypt in 1801, took part in the 1809 attack on Martinique, and was promoted to major-general just before his fortieth birthday. Though he fought and commanded with distinction at El Bodon, Badajoz and Vitoria, he arrived in Portugal just too late for the battle of Busaco; then convalescence after being wounded kept him away from Salamanca, Madrid and Wellington's failure at Burgos. He was too far to the right at Sorauren, too much to the left on the River Nive, and involvement outside Bayonne, where he had a tricky time persuading the French commander to surrender after Napoleon had abdicated, meant that he missed the battles of Orthez and Toulouse. Even at Waterloo he was unlucky in that the 4th Division he commanded under Lord Hill was kept away to the west near Lille. However, Wellington picked Colville as one of three generals to command divisions (again the 3rd, his favourite) in the Army of Occupation. He stayed in France until the end of 1818, latterly with his wife Jane, whose letters have inspired this story. Sir John admits, "but for the portrait of the General." We should be grateful that the Raoburn canvas hung at last to hang beside the picture of Lady Colville.

Cloak and dagger department

By Brian Montgomery

LAURAN PAINE :
Britain's Intelligence Service
192pp. Hale. £6.50.
0 7091 7622 8

27 December. Sir George Downing told me his spies hath the key taken from De Witt's pocket when he is abed, his closet opened, papers brought to him, and left with him for an hour . . . and laid in their place again. He hath always their most private debates . . . and sent word thereof to the King.

This extract, quoted by Lauran Paine from Samuel Pepys's diary, shows how British Intelligence kept Charles II informed of the Dutch government's secret negotiations after the 1667 war with Holland; the theme could well be espionage in our own time, differing little from the story of CICERO—the butler who copied the secret papers of the British Ambassador to Turkey during the Second World War.

In *Britain's Intelligence Service* Mr Paine has recorded the history of the British Secret Service, which, he says, is discernible, as a wholly national organization, from the reign of Elizabeth I. He emphasizes that subsequently, "in the search for raw materials, strategic outposts and allies, England, as a central figure in seagoing discovery and exploration, leaned more and more upon Crown servants who, regardless of their official designations, were purely and simply spies". Mr Paine argues clearly that British foreign policy was the visible and audible extension of skilful Intelligence operations which, over many centuries, made possible some notable diplomatic successes—"along with some of the most embarrassing gaffes in British history". The author adds the corollary that few writers have even begun to put the Intelligence endeavour where it properly belongs—at the heart of the diplomatic function. He ascribes this gap to official restraints by the government, which has deliberately discouraged knowledge of the existence of British Intelligence.

This reluctance of government to reveal anything of our Intelligence activities, their success or failure, is a very topical subject, and Mr Paine has joined with other writers in bypassing the Official Secrets Acts to describe some little-known exploits of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Those range from our success, after the United States War of Independence, in buying Americans to spy for Britain; the secretary of Benjamin Franklin was persuaded to keep Whitehall fully informed, in advance, of Washington's peace formula.

One of many outstanding British successes came two centuries later when Oleg Penkovsky of the Russian Intelligence Service (RIS) volunteered, for two years, to spy for British Intelligence. It was Penkovsky's revelations of Soviet military power, at that time second to that of the United States, which enabled Washington to compel Khrushchev to withdraw his nuclear missiles from Cuba in 1962; a year later the RIS discovered Penkovsky's defection, and he was shot—for espionage against the Soviet state.

The author identifies the fine distinction, which has always been preserved, between the staff of SIS (the Crown servants already mentioned) and the secret agents they also control; and he stresses in particular the wide differences in talents, character, and upbringing which have always been found in SIS personnel. "During the Cromwellian wars every paper of importance signed by Charles I, enciphered or otherwise, was read and copied by a clergyman, James Wallis; he was a brilliant mathematician who "enriched himself well, charging high fees for his cryptanalytical work". In 1742 the Bishop of Bath and Wells was England's spy-master and "His Majesty's Decipherer".

The author has partially lifted the veil of British official history with results that will absorb his readers, including his updated account of the traitors Burgess, Maclean, Philby, George Blake (Blum postdated this book). Surprisingly there is scant mention of deception, the inevitable by-product of Intelligence.

Finally, against a background of increasing publicity about the highly successful interception of enemy secret (cipher) W/T communications at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, Mr Paine poses the question: "Will there ever be an unbreakable code?" He then goes on to describe in some detail the cipher system of the one-time pad, by which the coding of each separate signal is protected by a "key" of random numerals, which are destroyed immediately, and so can never be used again. Of course, this British invention is well known to every sophisticated Intelligence service but I have not before seen it publicly recorded. With all the marvels of modern computer technology and invention, however, every cipher must eventually be broken. But that is not the main and vital point, which remains unchanged: "To preserve absolute cipher security for the time needed to transmit your signal and achieve the intended result." Meanwhile we have Mr Paine's refreshing conclusion: "Few espionage networks throughout history have been as rich in tradition—or controversial accomplishments—as that of Great Britain. And none have been more zealous in guarding their secrecy".

The aesthetics of blackness

By Henry Louis Gates Jr

A. ROBERT LEE (Editor) :
Black Fiction
New Studies in the Afro-American Novel Since 1945
254pp. Vision Press. £12.95.
0 85478 264 8

In *American Hunger* (1977), which along with *Black Boy* (1945) makes up an autobiography he initially called "The Horror and the Glory", Richard Wright succinctly outlines his idea of the ironic relation between the individual black talent and an Afro-American cultural tradition ravaged by white racism:

What could I dream of that had the barest possibility of coming true? I could think of nothing. And, slowly, it was upon exactly that nothingness that my mind began to dwell, that constant sense of wanting without having, of being hated without reason. A thin notion of what life meant to a Negro in America was coming to consciousness in me, not in terms of external events, lynchings, Jim Crowism, and the endless brutalities, but in terms of crossed-up feeling, of psyche pain. I sensed that Negro life was a sprawling land of unconscious suffering, and that there were but few Negroes who knew the meaning of their lives, who could tell their [own] story.

Richard Wright, as both of his autobiographies seem intent on claiming, certainly counted himself among those "few Negroes" who could tell not only their own story, but also the woeful tale of their pathetic, voiceless black countrymen.

Wright evolved a curious and complex myth of origins of self and race. Whereas the black autobiographical tradition, exemplified by Frederick Douglass's three autobiographies, generally depicts a self which fulfils possibilities denied to its voiceless fellow blacks, Wright's class of ideal individual black selves seems to have included only Richard Wright. His humanity is achieved only at the expense of his fellow blacks, who surround and suffocate him. Indeed, Wright wills this self into being through contrast: the sensitive, healthy part is foregrounded against a determined, defeated black whole. He is a noble black savage, in the ironic tradition of Oroonoko and characters played by Sidney Poitier: the exception, not the rule.

For Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright's notion of the self and its relation to black culture seemed unduly costly. Indeed, it is this fiction of black culture against which both Ellison and James Baldwin railed, and which created the Great Divide in black literature, a fissure first apparent in the late 1950s in an extended debate between Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright.

This debate, staged not only in the contrast between the lyrical shape of Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and the naturalism of Wright's *Native Son* (1940) but also in the authors' reviews of each other's books, turns between two poles of representation. Hurston thought that Wright stood at the centre of "the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low down dirty deal". Against his idea of psychological destruction and chaos, she framed a counter-notion which the repressed and conservative maternal figure of *Their Eyes* articulates: ". . . it wasn't for me to fulfil my dreams of what a woman oughta be and to do. Dat's one of de holdbacks of slavery. But nothing can't stop you from wishin'. You can't beat nobody down so low till you can rob 'em of dey will." The sign of this transcendent self would be the shaping of a strong, self-reflective voice: "Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but dey wasn't no pulpit for me. . . . So whilst I was tendin' you of nights ah said ah'd save de text for you." Hurston re-voices this notion in her autobiography, *Dust Tracks on the Road* (1942), in a curious account of her mother's few moments before death: "Her mouth was slightly open, but her breathing took up so much of her strength that she could not talk. But she looked at me, or so I felt, to speak for her. She depended on me for a voice."

From the lyrical, disembodied, yet individual narrative voice Hurston created and handed over to black American fiction, emerges a singular transcendent, ultimately racial self, extending far beyond the merely individual. For her, the search for a black form of language defines the search for the self. Similarly, for Ellison, the self can emerge only through the will, as signified by the act of writing within a first-person narrative structure. As he writes in *Invisible Man*, "to remain unaware of one's form is to live a death".

For Richard Wright, by contrast, nature was brutal, irreducible and ineffable. Unlike Hurston and Ellison, Wright sees fiction not as a model of reality, but as a representative bit of it, a literal report of "the real". Art, for him, always remains referential. Accordingly, he draws on the voice of the third-person, past-tense authorial mode, and various tools of empirical social science to blend public with private experience. Never relinquishing the "proprietary consciousness", which the third-person voice inevitably entails, Rather predictably, Wright found Hurston's work "counter-revolutionary", while Hurston replied that she wrote novels "and not treatises on sociology".

Hurston's, Wright's and Ellison's divergent theories of narrative structure, of voice and its relation to knowledge and power, are the issues addressed by the eleven essays in A. Robert Lee's *Black Fiction*. The combination of sophisticated literary theory with close readings of virtually the entire sweep of black fiction published since *Black Boy*, makes this impressive, if uneven, volume indispensable.

Ian Walker's introductory essay discusses Wright's concept of naturalism, which inevitably sought out symbols of landscape as analogies for what Wright called the "No Man's Land into which the Negro mind in America had been stunted", and what Baldwin ultimately judged to be Wright's "bleak landscape . . . of the human heart". Walker's essay demonstrates just how much Wright reconstructed the received heritage of naturalism, through such tropes as the metaphor of invisibility, and the descent underground, which Ellison cultivated so fruitfully.

Brian Lee examines Langston Hughes's largely ignored "protest" fictions, most of which seem unable to escape a one-dimensional understanding of the determinism of racism. The single exception is Jesse B. Simple, the wise black everyman about whom Hughes built a broadly popular cartoon character. Only in the Simple series does Hughes allow for any sort of dialectic between self and environment.

Theodore Gross's reading of Ann Petry's fictions, the immediate beneficiaries of Wright's theory of the novel, is marred by his emphasis on documentary function, as if slivers of "black reality" could be reproduced whole within an artistic structure to form an "unblemished record of the physical conditions under which black Americans have had to live". Gross, like so many other critics of this literature, begs the question of structure for a more sociological approach. Lawrence R. Holland, on the other hand, provides an excellent analysis of Ralph Ellison's work, as full of insight as Tony Tanner's essay on *Invisible Man*, "The Music of Invisibility". Holland shows that the act of narration itself is the latent subject of Ellison's novel, in a process whereby a racial self emerges only by mastering the activity and techniques of "craft".

William Wasserston, with passing nods to Laing and Lacan, reveals how Baldwin eschewed Wright's model for those of Henry James and André Gide. Despite a melodramatic propensity to reduce his black characters to stereotypes and his white characters to archetypes, Baldwin's significance is not only that he directly links human behaviour and the recollection of experience but also that he argues for "skin itself, black skin in its hue and its history, [as] the measure of distance separating a man from his inner life".

Eric Mottram's extended reading of the successive public postures of Imamu LeRoi Amiri Jones Baraka isolates the elements common to Baraka's successive ideologies of bohemianism, cultural nationalism and his own curious hybrid of "Marxism". By contrast, Frank McConnell's study of Ishmael Reed, although enthusiastic, does not bring to this complex and clever rhetorical strategist the depth of attention he deserves. Reed's subtle reformation of the black narrative tradition into an essentially self-reflective and post-modernist endeavour is here not alluded to, despite references to Reed's employment of such forms as the detective story and the western. Similarly, Faith Pullin's reading of contemporary black women's fiction lapses into a view of the novel as primarily documentary, a vehicle for "truth", whether psychological, political, or historical. Pullin's attempts to appear politically sympathetic result in a tone of condescension, especially to Alice Walker and Toni Morrison.

In an extended analysis of Wright's relation to John A. Williams, John Oliver Killens, and William Melvin Kelley along with Ellison's relation to Walker, Reed, and Morrison, Christopher Bigsby perceptively suggests that the common ground of black fiction is a fundamental questioning of "the authority of the self and the reality of Lockean notions of a social contract". Despite the pervasive dreams of apocalypse so common to black fiction, Bigsby argues, the dream is rendered ambiguous since almost always it is over-powered by "the counter-conviction that the 'last moment', through its full utterance, may be deferred". As Bigsby concludes, the determinism of naturalism "is consistently deflected into hope".

Graham Clarke finds in the works of Julian Mayfield, Cyrus Colter, Robert Deane Pharr, and Hall Bennett the language of ultra-realism, a language which deconstructs the world it confronts, and concomitantly the very language it employs to do so. If Melville found Hawthorne to be "ten times black", these writers claim to be ten times blacker than that, since their fiction is "committed to the realization of a language and style intended on forging an absolute aesthetic of race, of blackness". It is this observation, coupled with the subtlety of his reading, which makes Clarke's essay, along with Bigsby's, the most penetrating in a fine collection. Not since Robert Bone's now dated *Negro Novel in America* has black American fiction received such sustained scrutiny.

The chase for connotations

By Lucy Beckett

FRANK DOGGETT :
Wallace Stevens
The Making of the Poem
160pp. Johns Hopkins University Press. £7.25.
0 8018 2324 2

Stevens's poems endlessly invite and endlessly frustrate commentary. Lavish in quantity (there are 534 pages in the *Collected Poems* and much considerable work printed elsewhere), and high though not uniform in quality, they offer the critic an enticing arbitrariness of imagery and reference within a set of preoccupations, to do with the relationship between reality and the imagination, maintained over fifty years. Frank Doggett's new book, a less ambitious enterprise than his *Stevens' Poetry of Thought* (1966), uses some of the many passages of specific explanation in Stevens's letters to support fresh readings of a selection of the poems. It also traces the course of some ideas, images and methods upon which Stevens meditated and worked variations throughout his career.

All this Doggett does with modesty, and with a sympathy for the poet born of long acquaintance with everything he wrote. Nevertheless the book does not entirely avoid the perils which have beset much of the now voluminous literature on Stevens. The sense of unity which Stevens's *oeuvre* conveys — "the whole of *Harmonium*" as he called it—can impose a rather airless circularity on the discussion and at the same time starve it of value-judgment. Some of the poems examined in this book are better than others, and this fact, and the reasons for it, do not emerge as clearly as they should, while some of the more satisfying accounts are those given of the less interesting poems.

Part of the problem, of course, is that the better a poem is, the more complex and successful its control of connotations, the less adequate any single reading of it will be. Professor Doggett's careful and tactful exposition of Stevens's habits of composition, and his hedging of his argument with constant reminders of the dangers of over-definite limitation of meaning, make it clear that he is perfectly aware of this. He knows also that the explanations of poems that Stevens generously gave his correspondents are necessarily partial, often blandly casual, and sometimes deliberately evasive. "It is not possible", Stevens said himself, "to attach a single, rational meaning to such things without destroying the imaginative or emotional ambiguity or uncertainty that is inherent in them and that is why poets do not like to explain".

All the same, Doggett does sometimes fail to avoid the very traps he describes. In the third poem of the third part of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction", an ancient image of deity, "A lasting visage in a lasting hush", gives place to a new image:

That might have been.
It might and might have been. But as it was,
A dead shepherd brought tremendous chords from hell
And bade the sheep carouse.

Professor Doggett quotes Stevens's non-committal comment, "This dead shepherd was an improvisation. What preceded it in the poem make it necessary", and adds, "he was the traditional orphic figure but did not purpose an allusion to Orpheus." But it is impossible to read the poem without at least some sense of the striking replacement of the Old Testament God by the figure of Christ. The fact that Stevens mentions no such connotation in his own explanation need not deafen us to it. Similarly, Professor Doggett glosses the line "The sun comes up like news from Africa" with an obscure Stevens note about the subconscious. It should surely also be said in any commentary that its meaning and quality are inseparable from the monosyllabic simplicity with which, at the end of a twenty-four line poem, it triumphs over the abstract elaborations which have preceded it.

Stevens thought about the same things all his life, but, as Professor Doggett admits, with a cheerful inconsistency that largely defeats the critic's search for order and progress. "One has a theory for each poem," Stevens said. "I dare say that, in the long run, they all fit together." They do and they don't. Professor Doggett's accounts of patterns of composition, and of recurring imagery that gathered significance through the decades, certainly shed light on a wide variety of poems. But what the blurb calls "Stevens' poetics" seems in the end hardly less contradictory than as randomly presented by Stevens.

It is no adverse criticism of this mild and civilized book to say that it constantly reminds one of the truism that the only satisfactory words in which to describe what a poem is about are the words of the poem. "The plum survives its poems," Stevens wrote, with his deep, if rueful, respect for the incontrovertible existence of wordless reality over against the imagination's music. His poems, equally, survive their explications.

The Hudson River in Literature : An Anthology, edited by Arthur G. Adams (337pp. Albany, NY : State University of New York Press. 0 87395 445 9) contains poems and excerpts from novels and essays that describe the river and life along it before the twentieth century. Among the writers included are Walt Whitman, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper and Edgar Allan Poe.

Pitcher Plant

After rain sunlight flares prismatically through steam
rising between packed trees which, however, never stop dripping.

Each survives its ancient lone dignity in this sodden heat.

I climb the one that's mine by growing my leaf midribs proud
of their leaves till on their own they curl round local twigs.
Those with none to go round might look dismal, as I might myself,
botanically far out as I am on an evolutionary tendril.

But I don't let them just dangle. Because I inhabit
an epoch and post so luxuriously cluttered even for exotic tastes
I do something inanely wonderful with these unpicked-up ends.
I grow a hollow bump on them which swells and splits at the top,
hanging like a vessel with hinged lid ready lifted for pouring.

But they aren't for libations. Strong and heavy and indeed holding
water (as solute for enzymes) the vessels grow soft violet spots.
Flies come like bees to a daisy and, venturing in, slip and die
in digestive juice. Extended leaf midribs, unengaged, make stomachs.

I wonder what the sun would think of me if it could think,
and the flies round my tree, if they had quickness to note me
before they were already writhing in one of my piebald jugs.

Peter Howe

With mallet aforethought

By C. H. Rolph

SIR MICHAEL HAVERS, PETER SHANKLAND and ANTHONY BARRETT:

Tragedy in Three Voices
The Rattenbury Murder
249pp. Kimber. £8.95.
0 7183 0147 1

How often, how sad, and how pointless it is that a murder trial reflects the words of George Meredith in *Modern Love*:

The actors are, it seems, the usual three:
Husband, and wife, and lover.

Here the murdered one is the husband, and the story is not dramatic or exciting. But in *Tragedy in Three Voices* the three belong to three different generations; the wife is beautiful and talented; the clouds are massing for the most unthinkable war in history; and the newspapers are ravenous for any diversion. In 1935 Alma Rattenbury, whose age is here reported as almost everything from thirty to thirty-eight, and her chauffeur-handyman lover George Stoner, who was eighteen, were brought to trial for the murder of her husband, who was fifty-seven. The murder itself was done with a mallet, clumsily, but gled, certain of detection. The police investigation was flat-footed, the forensic presentation dull and endlessly repetitive, the behaviour of the Old Bailey judge testy and irritable — it was Sir Travers Humphreys, and the evidence gave him plenty to exercise the irascibility for which, right back to his Treasury Counsel days, he had always been noted.

But the story lives because Alma Rattenbury, apart from being a very attractive woman, was a brilliant musician and (under the name of Lozanne) a prolific writer of the romantic ballads still popular in the 1930s. She was taken up by the BBC, by Keith Prowse the concert agents, by Ambrose and his Band, by Frank Titterton "the tenor mountain", by Richard Tauber, and by the Australian baritone Peter Dawson who recorded many of her songs. As a girl in her native British Columbia she had played a piano concerto and a violin concerto at one public concert; and twenty years later, when asked to play a Liszt rhapsody at a party, she said "What key would you like?" and then played it with complete assurance in the one chosen.

Francis Rattenbury, a distinguished Canadian architect who doted on her (they had both been married before), had on retirement brought her to live in Bournemouth, where after a few besotted years he found he had lost interest in her. She then fell in love with their young chauffeur, and he or she killed Rattenbury as if he were an encumbrance, whereas on the contrary he seems to have been the most complaisant of complaisant husbands. The story of their joint trial is retold in this book—there have been many previous accounts—by the distinguished lawyer who is now our Attorney-General, Sir Michael Havers QC, assisted by Peter Shankland the naval historian and Professor Anthony Barrett of the University of British Columbia, both of whom have a close interest in criminology. The whole book therefore bears the stamp of total authenticity.

The pace of it, you might almost say, is set by the opening sequence about the murder itself. On discovering the victim slumped in an armchair with his head battered, somebody sent for a doctor instead of for an ambulance. The doctor took an hour to come. He called for a surgeon who took another hour—and sent for an ambulance. It was another three hours before any of them told the police, though the murder was self-evident. In the presence of the police, a drugged and tipsy Alma Rattenbury then hysterically confessed to the killing, though she probably had not done it. The painstaking chapters through which this book makes its careful way, all through the various hearings, the examinations and cross-examinations of none-too-bright witnesses, inevitably contain many repetitions of the simplest facts. But it is enlivened, mercifully and I believe artfully, by extracts from the newspaper accounts supplied by specially-commissioned novelists and literary lions. Miss Tennyson Jesse, for example, was in the magistrates' court for the committal proceedings and found it possible there to report that Alma Rattenbury was "a course, brawling, drunken and callous woman", which she was not. (I heard her give evidence at the Old Bailey, where she seemed to everyone the very antithesis of all the Tennyson Jesse adjectives.) But by the end of the book Miss Jesse is her "staunch defender", seeing her as a "woman of immense courage" and declaring that:

Most people in England, especially women, seem easily able to feel superior to Mrs Rattenbury. She had had adulterous intercourse; she had asked for her lover a boy young enough to be her son; and the boy was a servant. That out of this unpromising material she had created something that to her was beautiful and made her happy was unforgivable to the people of England.

A newspaper in Alma's home town, Victoria, British Columbia, called her a "Twentieth Century Circe who lured men to their destruction to further her own ambitions" (without identifying either the lured men or the furthered ambitions). British newspapers during the trial seemed to have little doubt that she was the killer. And Stoner's counsel, J. D. Casswell, KC, saw that his only hope of saving his client was to throw the blame upon her, a process in which Stoner steadfastly refused to give him the smallest assistance.

When she was acquitted the crowd outside the court gave strident expression to its anger and disappointment. There had seemed every chance of a hanging, with a pretty woman on the end of the rope. Stoner, sentenced to death, was reprieved by the Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, but by the time Alma Rattenbury had drowned herself in the River Avon at St Church, close to the scene of murder. After only seven years commuted life sentence, Stoner released to join the army as and took part in the Normandy landings. He survived the war, say the authors of this book, to down as a responsible citizen. authors also record that the Bailey had been "turned court of morals, pronouncing less condemnation upon a who was innocent of the crime which she had been arrested who had offended against the ventions." They have given a mendably careful and sober of the evidence and the trial, ing all the sensation-mongering frequent intersperses from paper headlines, feature and other sources of a passage. Their book is a tinguished addition to the of crime and its social background.

Middle-aged spread

By Vieda Skultans

NEIL SMELSER and ERIK ERIKSON (Editors):

Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood
297pp. Grant McIntyre. £9.95.
0 86216 008 1

Erik Erikson published *Childhood and Society* in 1950 and by a curious irony this book became the inspiration for subsequent work on the psychology of adulthood. In part, our Freudian heritage has been responsible for this overconcentration on childhood (Freud, according to Erikson, had "a fuddish preoccupation with the more sordid aspects of childhood") and we must look to Jung for the antecedent of contemporary interest in theories of middle age. However, explanations for a changing focus of interest are also to be sought in historical demography. Firstly, because life expectancy has increased, death of close relatives is not usually experienced until late middle age. And, secondly, because childbearing is now concentrated in the early years of marriage, the "empty nest" is most commonly associated with middle age.

As one of the contributors here, Janet Zollinger Giele, writes: "These forces taken together help to identify the middle years as a distinct phase of life that never before stood out as distinctly from either young adulthood on the one hand or late adulthood on the other." Just as the recognition of childhood in the eighteenth century had to await certain changes within family structure, so too adulthood as a distinct stage of life worthy of scrutiny is dependent upon other social and demographic changes.

By now a whole generation of students has churned out essays on Erikson's scheme of developmental tasks confronting each unfolding stage of the life cycle. Erikson himself was anxious lest his "ascending list will be eagerly accepted by some as a potential inventory for tests of adjustment, or as a new production schedule in the manufacture of desirable children". Reading the present volume the value-laden quality of the original source of inspiration comes through. The title derives from Freud's enduring maxim that maturity resides in the capacity to love and to work. The essays in this volume are a motley collection written by a historian a social anthropologist, sociologists, psychologists and psychoanalysts. The first two essays on Freud and the Freud/Jung correspondence by Hale and Erikson respectively, throw little light on the book's theme.

These reservations apart the volume is rich in new insights. Robert Levine provides a cross-cultural perspective by tracing the conception of the life-cycle held by the Gusii people of Kenya. He describes the Gusii as constantly measuring their spiritual status by reference to their reproductive and economic progress. Success, or lack of it, in these two fields provide readings with which to gauge one's ultimate spiritual worth. Although, as Levine says, love and work have a different meaning for the Gusii than for us, one embedded in their domestic structure, the need to gauge how one is faring in life, particularly in relation to one's contemporaries, seems to be universally experienced. Neil Smelser's article on work and love in Anglo-American society derives from this earlier work on family structure and the Lancashire cotton industry in the nineteenth century. He traces the origins of the instrumental/affective dichotomy, familiar to readers of Parsons, to changes in class and family structure in the early nineteenth century. The ideology which separates the public world of work from the private world of the family, and which creates sex role stereotypes, is one that helps perpetuate inequality for women.

Ann Swidler's is perhaps the most interesting article. She traces the vicissitudes of love mythology and its bearing on adult identity. As earlier writers have already shown in dealing with love and marriage, the novel was simultaneously posing questions about identity, status, social mobility, and, indeed, livelihood for women. In the nineteenth century novel, choice of partner was a major contribution to the crystallization of identity. By contrast, in the modern world, "Love is not the emblem of a crystallized identity, but the impetus for continuing self-exploration." Love is no longer the fusion of two complementary and interdependent halves, as in Plato's account, but a rational contract between two autonomous individuals: "Sometimes the intensity of concern with the self-conscious negotiation of terms, rights and responsibilities in relationships makes their activities sound like those of a workshop or a battlefield rather than those of a domestic circle." The source of this change in values and expectations is again to be sought in the social functions of marriage. Since marriage has becomes less a concern for whole families creating new alliances and since women have achieved a greater degree of economic independence, bargaining no longer takes place between parents over the financial conditions of a forthcoming marriage, but between individuals over the terms of the union.

Marjorie Fiske's article, in addition to providing a useful summary of the different theoretical approaches of life cycle theorists, suggests that with increasing age there is a reversal in the commitments of men and women. Men tend to put less emphasis on the stereotyped masculine virtues such as control, achievement and autonomy and to pursue more feminine attributes, whereas women move in the reverse direction.

What the book does lack is a less oblique, more concentrated consideration of some of the theoretical problems and confusions raised in studying the life-cycle. Erikson's "epigenetic" model of development takes little account of the social distribution of stressful events, or, indeed, of social structure. George Brown, for example, has shown in his work on depression that stressful events tend to cluster in those sectors of society where people have least resources to cope. This fact is recognized by one of the contributors, Pearlin, who found that working-class people tend to make less successful adjustments to middle and old age than do their middle and professional-class counterparts. Models of the life-cycle have been derived from observations of the middle classes. What is needed is a more critical approach to the interaction between the life-cycle and society. One of the contributors writes that what we all need is a vision of human potential and no doubt that in itself will ensure the popularity of the book and compensate for its weaknesses.

Hand-writings handbook

By Michael D. Reeve

ANDREW G. WATSON:

Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 700-1600 In the Department of Manuscripts, The British Library
2 volumes.
190pp. 915 illustrations.
British Library. £95.
0 7141 0487 6

"It was the fashion of scribes in the past, on finishing a work, to add their name at the end of the volume, so that posterity might bestow further praise on their industry and accuracy. I too, therefore, shall append my name in the time-honoured fashion, but not before I have briefly explained how it came about that the Martinozzi family, which hitherto always occupied itself in commerce and seldom if ever gave a thought to literature, has now turned to writing manuscripts. . . ". A local worthy at Fano so fired Pietro Martinozzi with love of books that without altogether abandoning the family tradition he set about acquiring a library in order to give his sons and grandsons the opportunity he had not had himself of achieving high office and renown. The first work of literature that this renegade tradesman made his son Galeotto copy was a translation of Aristotle's *Economics*. The translator, however, had recently been chancellor of Florence, and when at the end of 1450 Galeotto could take stock of four manuscripts written with growing assurance, it was not economics that they had in common but the chancellor of Florence: after Aristotle, Plutarch's lives of Antony and Demosthenes and his own *Introduction to ethics*, *War of Italy against the Goths*, and *Life of Cicero*. Nothing like reading the great on the great if you want to become great.

Galeotto's four manuscripts are described and illustrated in an Italian forerunner of Andrew Watson's *Catalogue*. And the Italian editor confined herself strictly to dated manuscripts only three of the four would have appeared, and Galeotto's biographical note, which brings all four to life, would be waiting for a catalogue of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome or an anthology of long-winded subscriptions. In the *Catalogue* "no attempt has been made to emulate the example of the French catalogues of dated manuscripts by listing undated and undatable manuscripts of known provenance or manuscripts written by named scribes". Ah well, fatter volumes would have taken longer and cost more, and it would be churlish to demand still greater exertion from a Reader in Manuscript Studies who has worked his way single-handed through the medieval manuscripts of the British Library and described 953 written in any of ten centuries anywhere from Ireland to the eastern outposts of the Italian republics.

Even dated manuscripts, however, leave their cataloguer some discretion, and if measurements are going to be included other things too can assert claims. The published catalogues of the British Library are mostly too old to analyse miscellanies adequately, and here Watson might have offered more, for instance on Harl 2561, where so sweeping a statement as "this refers to fols 195-207v, the preceding leaves being in another hand" is worse than none at all. He might also have given subscriptions in full, —ess: I seem just to have a soft spot for scribes who instead of telling one what one knows already ("here endeth auspiciously the twelfth and last book of the *Aeneid* of P. Virgilius Maro") record that they copied the manuscript "with my left hand", "in prison in a tower", "when a third of the sun was eclipsed", or "on February 2nd 1477 at Venice, when my third daughter Ursa, born on January 23rd 1477 to me Jacobus Surianus of Rimini, doctor, and my beloved wife Eugenia, took leave for the stars and was buried", let me give two examples of unhappy curtailment.

Harl 3995 was written in 1397 by Tedaldo della Casa "dum lum plenus dierum existerer et per annum tertium curreret Saturni", (a, when he was seventy [he shows in his hand]; a fair amount can be read in print about this friend of Boccaccio and Salutati, but not his date of birth, which Watson withholds by cutting off the clause at "existeret" (sic, and a Latin word). At the front of Add 15102 Johannes Trithemius, abbot of Spanheim, declares that the following letters and life of St Hildegard (s xii), were copied at his behest in 1487, albeit in haste, from an enormous volume preserved in the monastery of St Rupert, Bingen, and commonly believed to be in the saint's hand (remarks ensue on her opaque and inspired style); nothing of this from Watson beyond the date.

In a work on dated manuscripts I miss a note on how dates were written, or at least a reference to some handbook such as Cappelli's *Cronologia*. "1407, Trier style, a leap year" is not immediately perspicuous, and not everyone knows the *indictio* of 1980 or the equivalent of "vi Idus Sextilis". "No attempt has been made to change from Old Style or any other form of dating to New Style", but in places it has (Harl 2592 losos a year, Add 25600 gains 38), and why not throughout? More important, departures from classical grammar may create ambiguity. Burn 208 was written "anno domini mcccc xxix mensis aprilis". Add 28025 "millesimo quadringentesimo duodecimo mensis iulii": April 29 and July 12 1400, or April 1429 and July 1412 (for a genitive of month see or Add 19578, Eg 938)? In Add 28025 the punctuation, omitted by Watson, perhaps favours 1400, but Burn 208 surely belongs to 1429. Classical grammar may also be ambiguous: Add 10291 was completed "anno etc milesimo quadricentesimo vicesimo tertio die mensis iunii", not obviously June 3, 1420 rather than June 23, 1400.

Some corrections from the thirty or so manuscripts that I checked: Add 6047 "mcccclii", and not "Weyminsteren" but "Weyhensteven"; 9831 not "precius" (never Latin) but "precio" (abbreviated); in 10415 the first subscription does not look contemporary with the text, and the mistaken *indictio* suggests that it was added at the date of the second subscription; in 14786 other parts of the subscription reveal that Bonifacius de Aliyardis left Bergamo when the Venetians occupied it, and the coat of arms, as a later note alongside says, is his; 38644 not "ergo tota" but "ergo rota"; Arund 474 written not in 1414 but in 1413, "in which year there was such a great glut of produce and everything that not a year in the past 50 resembled it"; Burn 152 "Clariatis" anything but certain, and the coincidence of text and date speaks for identity with a manuscript at Venice assigned by Morelli c 1800 to Simon de Brimatis (Bradley, *Miniaturists* 1 175; cf II 236); 186 not "Lucanensis" but "Lucanus"; Eg 2865 not "Margino" but "Margnio"; Harl 2552-3 not "Johannes Virginis" but plain "Johannes" ("Virginis" goes with "magna cum laude", which would be clearer if the previous two lines had been quoted); 2561 not "in Apurvano" but "in Apuniano" (near Lucca); 3697 not "Anno xx[*recte* x] Ricardi secundi post conquestum vicesimo" but "Anno r (egni) r (egis) Ricardi secundi post conquestum undecimo"; 3893 not "Anno domini" but "Ad". An intrusion from the adjacent column misdates Harl 1229 by 150 years.

No more complaints when there are so many people to thank for so much: Edward IV and subsequent collectors for the number and variety of the manuscripts in the British Library; Albinia de la Mare and Sigrid Krämer for putting at the author's disposal their experience of Italian and German manuscripts; the Oxford University Press for printing the handsomest and most manageable volumes of this invaluable series; and the author himself for his patience and erudition. May the dated manuscripts of the Bodleian charm his eye and beguile his mind.

Break, break, break

By Wendy Cope

JO GABLE:

The Tuppenny Punch and Judy Show
25 Years of Television Commercials
192pp. Michael Joseph. £9.50.
0 7181 1858 8

Churchill coined the phrase "the tuppenny Punch and Judy show" to express his forebodings about commercial television. He was right in so far as it has turned out to be colourful, popular and violent, but no-one could call it cheap. In the final chapter of this light-hearted and largely uncritical survey Jo Gable describes television advertising, more accurately, as "the most expensive roller-coaster of them all".

Like all the best commercials, her book is glossy and beautifully produced. "Two years of intensive research" have resulted in what would be a very slim volume were it not for large print and numerous illustrations. The eight pages of colour stills from recent campaigns are less interesting than the black-and-white photographs recalling the more distant past: the days of advertising magazine programmes, the lonely man with the Strand, and the first appearance of such long-lived characters as Dad's Katie and the Brooke Bond chimps.

The chimps haven't changed much, but the women look very different. Even allowing for changes in fashion, the photographs bear out the author's claim that television commercials, in the first ten years were "more truly reflective of women". "Mums" in the early days were not always young, pretty and impeccably groomed; nor was it unusual for women to be shown in authoritative roles outside the home—as scientists in a laboratory, commercial, for example, or as interviewers and studio presenters. Things began to change, Jo Gable says, with the "Key" Sea Witch hair colourant commercial in 1965: haughty, mysterious creatures, "not at all like women of this world", were shown sitting on rocks while their flowing white dresses moved gently in the breeze. They were, apparently, a tremendous success and have influenced advertisers ever since. At the same time women were becoming less inhibited about their bodies and fashions more revealing. Photographers and film makers were quick to take advantage of the "new freedom" to produce more provocative images.

This nod in the direction of the feminists is about the nearest the author comes to making any adverse comment on the business. Several chapters are taken up with giving credit to the people behind the commercials—jingle-writers, animators, and the actors and actresses who provide the voice-overs—and while their skills no doubt deserve recognition, it makes for some boring stretches in the text. In the chapter on music the reader is informed that a company called Air-Edel has "some of the country's top composers" under contract to write jingles. Tippett? Maxwell Davies? Well no, but they have got Mike Batt who wrote the Wombles songs. The list of directors, however, does include some august names: Lindsay Anderson, for instance (Cwbwnk Carpet Sweepers, Iron Jelloids, Picnic, Guinness, Kellogg's Cornflakes) and Joseph Losey (Ty Horlicks).

Anderson and Losey probably do not mention these achievements in their presence. Dealing with commercials is a lucrative business nowadays than it was in the past. At one time there was a distinction amounted to a blot on the copy-writing among the acting profession for those who dared to be seen dabbling in the dirty fields who did so were kept at a dignified distance from the profession. In 1955 Sir Compton Mackenzie, sitting in an arm-chair with a book open on his knee, told viewers that he much he valued a good night's sleep. Herbert Morrison also mentioned in his closing seconds of the advertisement, and by another voice.

"Fearfully British and frightfully ministerial", commented Peter Crosby in a *Washington Post* article about our early commercials. Boring and uninstructive though they were they provoked a fair number of complaints. Many of them were about the inept handling of "natural breaks". In 1957, for instance, Kingsley Martin, appearing in a studio discussion, was stopped in mid-sentence for a Bovril advertisement. A little later the public began to protest about advertisers who made misleading claims, compelling the Independent Television Companies Association to set up a committee to vet scripts.

Even so, as Milton Shulman was one of the first to point out, there is reason to believe that "the vast bulk of the British public actually like the commercial breaks"—and not only because they provide an opportunity to make tea, or put the cat out. Comedians soon found that references to jingles and slogans were greeted with affectionate laughter, and a survey too recent to be mentioned in Jo Gable's book revealed that over half the TV audience thinks the advertisements are better than the programmes. Some advertising campaigns have become mini soap-operas with members of the audience responding in ways that indicate considerable emotional involvement. When Bet, for several years the child-star of a beefburger commercial, left "for Australia" viewers wrote and begged the company not to let him go because it would break his little girlfriend's heart. This sort of concern is not restricted to human characters. Another Birdseye campaign featured a "cannonball pea" which was not tender enough to be dropped into the pack. People felt so sorry for it that the company "often had to answer letters from the public about an animated vegetable".

As yet no television advertisement (and probably no programme either) has caused as much public grief as did the death of Grace Archer on September 22, 1955, the night ITV was born. When the first, hitherto SR toothpaste commercial was being broadcast, many of its potential viewers were still busy trying to get through to the BBC to ask why the fatal accident had to happen. Jo Gable's research has confirmed what was previously only suspected: "Auntie" BBC planned the tragedy months in advance with the deliberate intention of stealing her new rival's thunder. Twenty-five years too late to be much of a scoop, this revelation is, none the less, the sort of interesting titbit that makes *The Tuppenny Punch and Judy Show* quite an entertaining coffee-table book.

Not by technicalities alone

By Nicolas Barker

PHILIP GASKELL:

From Writer to Reader
268pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £11.50.
0 19 818171 X

In 1972 Philip Gaskell published *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, a work designed to supplant R. B. McKerrow's classic *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (1927). The disappearance of "for literary students" was significant. Where McKerrow lured his reader with the bait of a better understanding of the text into the complexities of pre-industrial book-production, Gaskell faced his reader with a step-by-step account of not one, but two, obsolete technologies, that of the hand-press (died c 1800) and that of mechanized letterpress printing whose funeral took place the other day (the memorial service is still to come). Textual scholars and theorists were distressed that his application of these facts to their problems took up a mere fifty pages in over 400. Some critics, with justice, thought the treatment too brief and cut-and-dried: G. T. Tanselle was right to wonder if a book of this kind might not be expected to prepare its readers a little more broadly, so that they would understand why many of the nineteenth and twentieth-century problems they encounter are based on different principles from those laid down in Greg's "Rationale of Copy-Text". Others, less fairly, were more prepared to admit that the bibliographer had not only acquired new knowledge, but had materially altered his stance towards its application.

From Writer to Reader is Gaskell's answer. It offers a series of case-studies of twelve works by major writers with illustrations of extended passages from the various versions in which the text is found. These works were not "chosen because they proved a theory or supported a preconception" so much as for the wide, and in some cases comprehensive, range of the material that each offered for the study of the transmission of texts from the sixteenth century to the present. The twelve are Harington's *Ariosto*, Milton's *Comus*, Richardson's *Pamela*, Swift's *Directions to Servants*, Scott's *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, Tennyson's "Oenone", Dickens's *David Copperfield* and Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*, Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, Hardy's *The Woodlanders*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*.

The wealth of evidence, from early draft to ultimate revised print, that these offer is not just intended to illustrate the practice of different authors and periods. It is designed to prove Gaskell's thesis that "a textual editor is nothing if he is not a literary critic . . . for no bibliographical rule of thumb is going to lead him to the right answer every time".

The result is a book at once stimulating and valuable. The variety of the cases chosen and the careful chronological spread make it a useful introduction to the study of English textual transmission from 1,500 to the present day. Its fault is obvious: few other texts exist in so many forms and neither editor nor critic will find much help here in dealing with that frequent problem, the reconstruction of a crucial missing link. But if no theory or preconception lay behind the choice of examples, the result startlingly confirms Gaskell's earlier claim that "every case is unique, and every one calls for the fresh exercise of an editor's literary judgment", and that "Textual bibliography is based on the union of literary judgment with bibliographical expertise". Time and time again previous editors are found to have missed the point because they have not combined understanding of the words with an equal grasp of technicalities, whether Elizabethan handwriting or the use of stereotype plates. It is not enough to understand either the text or the mechanics: one has to know both.

Faced with these examples, the editor or critic might well agree that no preconceived principles would have solved his problems. He might even doubt if, among such a cloud of witnesses, a stable text can exist or, if it could be constructed, would be preferable to the shimmering mobile vision of the text in development. *From Writer to Reader* does not evade these doubts.